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YOUTH ON THE PROW.

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YOUTH ON THE PROW.

A Novel.

By LADY WOOD.

AUTHOR OF "ROSEWARN," "SABINA,"
"ON CREDIT," "THROUGH FIRE AND WATER," "SHEEN'S FOREMAN,"
ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



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YOUTH ON THE PROW.

CHAPTER I.

“O happy those whose lucid brains
Ne'er suffer arithmetic pains,
But with a tranquil resolution
Find the hard problem's quick solution.”

AFTER a short delay, Albert appeared with a perturbed countenance, and asked Helena if she knew where Miss Sable could be found.

“She is gone out to walk,” said Helena. “She will not be back for some time. Is Lord Santly ill?” she continued, seeing the footman's distressed face.

“No, miss, only dreadful put out. He has got a bill, or twenty bills in one, seemingly, and his house-steward is gone to the market to sell the corn, and my lord is in such a fury that he cannot add the bill up to rights,

so he sent for the governess to go over the accounts."

"I can do accounts, pretty well," said Helena.

"Perhaps, miss, you had better come, for I dare not go back without somebody."

Helena preceded Albert to the library, and walking up fearlessly to Lord Santly, who had the folio bill in his hand, over which his prominent blue eyes flashed sparks of fire, she said, "I can do accounts, sir, if you will permit me to try."

He held the paper out without reply.

"You wish all the columns to be added up, and the sums charged against each article?"

"Yes; do it," said the peer.

Helena looked at the labour, and saw that it would take an hour to complete.

"Shall I take it away, my lord, or do it here?"

"Do it here," growled the old man. "Sit down at the table."

The bill was from a general shop, and had been incurred by the servants during Lord

Santly's absence from home, without his knowledge or that of his housekeeper.

Helena found that the value of each article had to be calculated, such as two pounds six ounces of bacon at 1*s.* 2½*d.* per pound, three yards and a quarter of house-flannel at 1*s.* per yard, and thus on over a space of two years and some months. She took a half-sheet from the waste-basket to make her small sums, and then marked the errors, which were numerous, by the side of the page. The old peer gazed at her delicate face, slightly flushed by her calculations, and thought she showed high breeding in her form, and that it was a pleasant thing rather than not to have a beautiful child to do his accounts, if indeed she could manage anything so intricate as this horrible and unexpected bill. As he thought of this, with his elbows resting on the arms of his chair, and the tips of his white fingers meeting each other, as if he wished to fit the extremities exactly, he dropped them unknowingly, and his head sank back gently, and he slept.

Twilight drew on, and Helena's eyes seemed

destined to suffer, both by her patron's requisitions and those of her governess.

At length her task was accomplished, and she sat still as a mouse in the presence of a majestic tom-cat. She dare not move, lest he should resent being awakened. She was thankful that Turk had followed her closely as she entered the library, and was crouched up under the folds of her frock.

"Dear Turk! I cannot be quite unhappy whilst I have you," she whispered, and he responded by a loving touch of his cold nose.

At length Lord Santly started up, and rang the bell sharply. "Candles!" he cried, "and a lamp!" When they were brought, he saw Helena, and remembered all his previous vexation.

"Well! have you done it? Have you done it?" he repeated, eagerly.

"Yes, sir; I believe I have done it correctly, but it seems to be full of errors, and I should prefer that Mr. Elms, the steward, should go over it."

"Where do you find it wrong?" cried the peer in a harsh voice.

Helena brought the folio over, and, kneeling down, opened it before Lord Santly, and pointed her finger at a mistake in the pounds in the first page.

"I knew it—I knew it—that is what I made it. I knew the scoundrel was wrong!"

"There are several other mistakes," said Helena, "and the sum total which Mr. Dyer states to be one hundred and thirty-seven pounds, I make one hundred and twenty-three pounds seven shillings and sixpence half-penny."

"It is cheating—rank robbery!" cried the peer.

"It may be carelessness," said Helena, timidly, "for sometimes he cheats himself; but the sum total certainly looks awkward."

"I will not pay him a penny of his bill!" said Lord Santly, who knew that the law was against him, and that he was liable for all the articles if correctly rendered. He was a man particular in his expenditure, and very determined not to have any bills. During his absence the servants were put on board wages, but they ran up bills at a

general shop at Oldchester in his lordship's name. Mr. Dyer allowed the account to run on for some years, knowing that when once presented the purchasing would be put a stop to.

"What a nuisance it is to be so cheated!" said his lordship aloud, Helena being sole auditor.

"If you please, sir," suggested the girl, "Mrs. Delacy had a little printed book of orders for the different tradesmen; when she required anything, she wrote the quantity down and signed it, and the tradesmen dared not charge any not signed. I know, because I have been sent for goods when Mrs. Delacy was out, and they have refused me."

Lord Santly looked up. "Very good, my practical young lady; they seem to have taught you accounts at Mrs. Delacy's?"

"Yes, sir; it was a little deformed writing master who taught the young ladies, and very few learnt anything of him, so he liked to teach *me*."

"Tell Mr. Dyer to come up," said Lord Santly, ringing his bell for Albert.

Helena was gliding out of the room.

"Stay," said the peer, in a harsh voice.

The owner of the general shop appeared—a lean, evil-faced man with a squint, and a shambling gait.

"What the devil do you mean, you scoundrel, by letting my servants run up bills at your d—d shop for three years without sending it in?"

"If you please, my lord, I only send the bills at Christmas, and your lordship has not been here at that season. I did send the account in, but perhaps it was mislaid. Maybe the woman in the house could not tell where your lordship was. I sent bill delivered, but your lordship would have the articles put down."

"I should think so indeed! and a fine mess you've made of it! Do you know there are several errors in the bills?"

"No, sir—no, my lord; they are all right—that is, I'm sure Mr. Elms, the steward, will find them so."

Mr. Dyer knew that the old peer was too indolent to go over the account, and the steward was a very good friend of his, and would detect

no error even should they be, like Falstaff's reasons, plentiful as blackberries.

"It is a matter of indifference to me whether Mr. Elms finds the account right or wrong," said the peer, with a new-born determination—"I have found them wrong. In this page there is two pounds nineteen shillings overcharged. The real account due for your most rascally bill is one hundred and twenty-three pounds, seven shillings and sixpence halfpenny. I will write a cheque for the money, and never dare to show yourself on my estate again. I shall discharge any servant who goes to your shop."

The man saw the round, carefully-written, childish hand of Helena, and darted a malign glance at her as he left the room. He would revenge himself some day, he trusted, on that young miss who had detected his dishonesty.

"You are a good girl, usefully taught," said the peer—all my doing, he thought. "You will do well—I shall employ you again."

Helena curtsied and returned to the school-room. She expected a reproof from Miss Sable for not having made more progress with the torn

founce, but the weather was not likely to be propitious for thin dresses, and her object in giving it to Helena was to prevent her watching her possible interview with the young Doctor.

Moreover, Albert had informed her that his master had been dreadfully angry, and had ordered Miss Sable to go to him. She understood that Lord Santly had been very angry at her absence.

"I told the young lady she had better go and try to pacify my lord," said Albert. "I fancy master fell asleep, and she, poor young lady! dared not stir till he rang the bell for lights."

As Albert left the room, Helena entered.

"For what did my lord want you?" said mademoiselle.

"To add up a long bill."

"Rather you than I. I was not hired as an accountant," said the lady, grandly.

She was not in a happy mood; for though she had wandered in the woodland till quite dark, the young Doctor had not appeared, having been sixteen miles in an opposite direction.

On the following afternoon Helena was sum-

moned again by Albert to attend on Lord Santly, and again he set her down to long sums of accounts, for he had begun to suspect Mr. Elms, his steward, of appropriation. He marked the leaves she was to add up, and desired her to place the sums total on another sheet, which, when finished, he directed her to put into a certain drawer. "When you have done that, you need not wait to show it to me. I shall not examine the accounts again till to-morrow morning."

So Helena worked, and Lord Santly slept, lying back in his chair, till the moon rose and threw her pallid light on his high, white forehead, fringed round with silvery hair. Helena lighted a candle and shaded its rays from his lids, till her appointed task was accomplished, when she deposited the sheets of annotation in the drawer he had specified and departed.

She took a little run with Turk and then joined mademoiselle at the tea-table.

Miss Sable had the sleekly sinister air of a pussy cat, that hears the nibbling of a mouse in her dreams; she smiled to herself for

she was in good spirits, which meant good temper. She had seen Doctor Abner ; not in the woodland but driving along the high road. She seemed to be walking in the direction in which he was driving, and pulling up his horse he sprung out, and politely begged permission to convey her in to any place where she might wish to go.

Miss Sable had not come out unarmed for conquest. Her large, languid, deep-lidded eyes were shadowed by a small hat, which came coquettishly over the brow. Her dress was tight-fitting, and a delicate scarf gave lightness and movement to her attire.

She thanked him with an air of timid reserve, and said she should be obliged if he would carry her to a cottage just before reaching the town.

"A visit of charity," said the doctor, with admiration in his eyes.

The lady caught the glance and looked down in silence. "I hope to goodness," said she to herself, "that he has no patient there, and that he will ask me no questions."

"Do good by stealth and blush to find it

fame,' " said Doctor Abner, glad to have an appropriate quotation to fling at the lady, whereby he might impress her with a sense of his culture. Poor dear man ! he did not know how trite it was, or he would not have been so proud of it.

Miss Sable thought it her duty to blush, so she went through the form of turning away her head.

She had a small basket on her arm, and Doctor Abner, whose eyes were ever alert, saw a bit of green leaf partly shut in by the cover.

"Dittany," said he to himself. "Are you fond of botanising?" he asked.

"Yes," said the lady, "I have taught it a little sometimes. Ladies like their daughters to learn. They think it such an *innocent* occupation."

The Doctor was silent. He thought of teaching the young idea how to shoot, but feared he might be thought to imply some pun. He did not quite agree with the "ladies" referred to, so he took refuge in silence.

After a short pause, he continued: "I found a fine specimen of the bee orchis in the wood-

land once last spring, near the spot where I first had the pleasure of meeting you."

"Ah! a bee orchis! I have never been happy enough to find a plant of it," ignoring the pretty little reference to their first meeting.

"If you remain in this neighbourhood, I shall be most happy to introduce you to the spot where they grow next spring."

Miss Sable sighed. "I hope I may remain. You know I am the instructress of Miss Vernon, who is Lord Santly's ward. I do not know what his lordship's intentions may be with regard to my pupil—but here is the cottage."

The Doctor pulled up, and getting down handed the lady out. But as he looked, the German grammar, which he had taken to conjugate a verb on his journey, fell at the feet of Miss Sable.

She recognised the book at once, and said, "Gotto! you are studying German. Ah! I see the page is turned down at —— Lieben."

Doctor Abner became very red. "You see," he said, apologetically, "it is so important to me to be able to read scientific works on medicine

and surgery in German. They beat us so thoroughly, I am glad to take any chance I can of a spare half-hour to get some of the language into my stupid head. You are a German scholar, no doubt?"

"Oh!" said the lady, "I am an Alsatian, and learnt both German and French as a child, so I am able to speak each like a native."

She was arranging the folds of her dress after her change of position as she spoke, and had no idea that by that simple admission she had given the finishing touch to her attractions in the opinion of her auditor.

A man who has looked longingly at a pretty girl, thinking she has not a penny, and that he dare not commit himself by proposing to her, and finds accidentally that she has fifty thousand pounds and is probably beyond his reach, might have some idea of Doctor Abner's feelings at the quiet statement made by Miss Sable. The possible possession of fifty thousand pounds would have offered less attraction to the young man than the acquirement of the German language. There are some men who are so super-

fluously active that they prefer climbing a hill to being carried up in a carriage.

Miss Sable remained for an instant at the gate of the little cottage-garden, lest Doctor Abner should turn to look at her after his parting bow, and see that she did not enter. When he had turned the corner, she retraced her steps towards the mansion, not at all displeased by her little drive with the Doctor.

Inside the cottage an old woman was crooning over a few sticks she had gathered up in Lord Santly's park, and with a Bible on her knees sat a fair-haired girl, who was waiting to read a chapter to her. The old woman preferred speaking to listening, which is not unnatural to the old, who feel their time is short. She was grumbling over her cough at night and her rheumatics in the day, and Emily sat like "dejected pity" at her side, when the sound of wheels was heard, and the girl's face flushed, and her heart beat quicker, for her watchful ear had learnt the sound of Doctor Abner's gig. It fluttered still more when there was a sudden pull up outside the door. She looked to the window, but the

monthly roses and withered briony had obscured the lattice-panes, and she could only distinguish some dark body. Then the Doctor ceased to obscure the light. He had sprung out. She heard his cheerful voice, and the soft tones of a woman's accents in answer. Then the gig went on, and presently after a pause she saw over the roses a beautiful face, surmounted by a coquettish hat, and her heart sank within her. The impulse of jealous curiosity was too strong, and she opened the cottage-door and looked after the retreating figure. Mademoiselle turned at that moment, and the eyes of the two girls met. Those of the fair creature expressed indignation. The dark eyes looked defiance.

"The wind cuts my legs right off," murmured the old crone. "It's a fine thing for these reckless girls to think they are doing their duty, a-coming to read, forsooth to a poor body, and then to set the door open and let in the cold draught right upon one. Ladies are the same as poor girls, always a-gandering after men; that's *their* pleasure, not reading to old bodies."

Emily heard half, and was conscience stricken. She came back.

"I will read to you with pleasure, Goody, if you like it."

"It do put me off to sleep a bit sometimes, so you may do a chapter, if 'tis a short un."

Emily read aloud Saint Paul's fine description of charity. "Charity thinketh no evil; charity suffereth long and is kind." She was trying to apply what she read to herself, when the old woman broke in, very practical in her ideas.

"That's all very fine, but what I call charity is to give a poor body a shilling, or maybe half-a-crown, and a good thick blanket at Christmas-time. I don't suppose I shall be alive then," she added regretfully; "and Mrs. Prior, she who married the cousin to the housekeeper at Lord Santly's, she got a pair of blankets, and a petticoat too."

"She has seven children, Goody!" replied Emily.

"Well! I've had fourteen!"

"But you have not got them now, so you can't want so many blankets."

"I've got a body to warm as well as other people ; and my flannel petticoat is like a colander."

"You shall have one, Goody, if I can manage it," said the girl, gently ; "and now I must leave you."

"Thank you, miss ; don't leave the door on the jar."

Emily returned home. There are some natures who cover up a grief and a mortification as if it were a shame.

Mrs. Elming observed that Emily was depressed during the evening, and tried to get at its cause.

This process generally has the same effect as touching an insect, which immediately rolls itself up tight for self-preservation.

"Has the walk tired you, Emmy?"

"No, mamma, I thank you. I am not tired."

"How far did you go?"

"To Dame Goody's. She wants a flannel petticoat, and fears she shall die before Christmas ; mamma. I must give her one of mine, if you cannot afford to let me make one."

"She is an ungrateful old woman, my child," but I daresay she is often cold and hungry."

"Cold and hunger," mused Emily. And she wondered if they equalled the punishment of an aching heart.

"I saw Doctor Abner," said Mrs. Elming, cheerfully. "He only bowed, for a man was talking to him very earnestly, and when he went away the Doctor drove on very fast to the surgery, and the man followed him for medicine I daresay. Did *you* see him?"

"At a distance," said Emily, truthfully, as far as her words went; but she felt as if she *could* not tell her suspicions. She connected those laughing voices with the Doctor's averted eyes, and felt more miserable than she had ever felt before, even when her father died; for it is from their contemporaries that the young receive their acme of pleasure or pain.

Mrs. Elming had ordered a cake to be made, and the baker's boy brought it home just in time for tea. Doctor Abner liked a new plain cake, and the widow had an idea that he would drop in that afternoon. Detecting a listening look on

Emily's face, she seemed as if she must go out and find him, and "compel him to come in." She put off the sacred time of tea full half an hour, though the kettle was dancing its lid impatiently, and sending large puffs of steam from lid and spout.

Then with a sigh she made the tea, and desired Emily to cut the cake. There was no reason why they should keep it for the ungrateful man who cared not seemingly for their company.

In the meantime Doctor Abner's thoughts were running on Miss Sable. When he snatched a quiet hour, that rare blessing to him, and immersed himself in his studies of German, every Gordian knot of lingual difficulty which his weary brain sought to disentangle, brought before him the idea of Miss Sable, who would cut it by two words of explanation, with that keen-edged sword, her tongue. The Doctor had once been called in to attend a self-taught artist in an attack of brain fever. He had tried various systems of perspective, and jumbled them hopelessly in his mind till perception

failed, and he raved of ground plans and vanishing points, points of sight and horizontal lines. The Doctor cured him, and to prevent a relapse brought with him one morning a master in perspective, who taught the patient in six lessons all that he had wasted his time and strength in attempting to acquire by himself in vain.

Doctor Abner thought of this with a feeling of rage that he could not at once seize the German governess and seat her there on the opposite side of the table till he had extracted as much information from her as his brain would receive in a limited time.

As this was impossible, he turned over many wild schemes as to improving his acquaintance with mademoiselle. "French, too!" he murmured; but French was less important to him than German. He could not picture any interview which was not surrounded by four walls, and of which the accessories were not a table, two chairs, a grammar, dictionary, and vocabulary.

He looked round his own room : could she be

tempted to come there in some of her walks and give him a lesson? She would have been perfectly safe, of course, but what tittle-tattle for the inhabitants of Oldchester would be made out of the transaction. The poor girl would lose her character, and I my practice. A medical man should never be suspected. His seeming purity must be intact. Then with a scornful laugh at his own folly, he tossed away the suggestion till some fresh difficulty sent him on to a fresh field of speculation. What if the widow would like Emily to have a few lessons in French and German, and would permit her to come and study there with Miss Sable? The strict propriety of that worthy woman would silence every ill-natured observation. Emily had learnt French at school, he had been told, but he had never seen her reading a French book, nor heard her utter a French sentence.

With the usual blunder-headedness of his sex, he thought the idea an excellent one, and saw no chance of its being negatived by the ladies. The only possible objection was in his anticipation on the part of Lord Santly, who might not

admire that the lady whose services he had retained for his ward should be, as it were, underlet. On that point he must satisfy himself. It would not do to communicate with the widow till Lord Santly's permission were accorded. It is true that the governess might not unnaturally desire to have some voice in the matter, but instinct rather than reflection gave the Doctor the idea that there would be but small demur on her part.

CHAPTER II.

"What voice is this, thou evening gale,
That mingles with thy rising wail?
And as it passes sadly seems
The faint return of youthful dreams."

IN the meantime the autumn evenings closed in, and the young governess and her charge curtailed the hours of lessons to take a walk before their dinner-hour rather than trespass on the hours of shadow.

"It is quite right that you should not go out in the twilight, Miss Vernon. I see that you are delicate. For me, I am strong, and no inclemency of the weather affects me."

Helena usually spent the afternoon in doing Lord Santly's accounts, so she lost no amusement or relaxation by the new arrangement.

One day as she walked by the side of her

governess on the boundary of a dense plantation she fancied she heard a voice once familiar and always beloved, calling her name. She stopped and listened.

"What is it?" asked mademoiselle. "Why do you stop?"

"Do you hear nothing?" asked the girl.

"Yes, I hear the sound of the brook over the pebbles."

"It must have been fancy," said Helena, but her cheeks remained blanched with emotion.

"Come along," said Miss Sable; "you are always fanciful."

As she spoke Helena fancied she heard the same sounds, but the nearer tones of mademoiselle's voice prevented her being assured that it was not fancy, and they walked on. There were ears, however, with intelligence that surpassed that of bipeds. Turk had been behind them when Helena first had her attention attracted by the familiar tones of a beloved voice, and when, having forgotten him for a few minutes, she turned to call him, he was not seemingly within the sound of his name, for

he made no response. Helena soon became nervous at his absence; her heart began to beat fast and thickly.

"I am afraid—afraid," she gasped, "that he may be caught in a trap!"

"You would hear him well enough then," replied the elder lady.

"Not if he were caught in a snare," said Helena, so white and blue in the colouring of her skin that Miss Sable thought she might faint; and if she does, said the governess to herself, one might have a good reason for sending for Doctor Abner.

"Ma'mselle," said Helena in desperation, "I *must* hunt through this covert! Please do not trouble yourself about me. If I tear my clothes I can mend them."

"I would not take the loss of a filthy animal so much to heart," said Miss Sable. "I shall not remain here; you may follow me when you are tired of looking. Probably the dog will be home before you."

Helena did not wait for any further permission; she put aside some of the branches

and pursued her way, clinging to the sides of the birches which made an arch over the little stream, where her progress seemed clearest of obstacles. At length, with hands wounded by clinging to the rough bark, and feet occasionally soaked by slipping into the stream, she arrived at the open warren, calling dismally on Turk. The country was studded with bunches of fern, and the colour where it was withered seemed not unlike the colour of Turk's coat in its lightest portion.

"Surely he will answer to my call, poor dear dog! He must be half-suffocated in a snare, and cannot utter a sound!" and Helena wept agitated tears of terror and suspense. She ran hither and thither, listening at intervals, till at length she saw something quivering at the entrance of a rabbit-burrow. She walked up to it, and saw it was the waving plume of Turk's tail. His body had disappeared, but the narrowness of the aperture had prevented his further progress, and he was too busy in excavating to listen to the voice of his mistress. With many reproaches Helena

seized his tail and dragged him back. He looked up at her with appealing eyes, wanting to return to his chase, but she refused sternly, and carried him in her arms to a long distance in the direction of the house, with depressed ears and tail.

He walked sullenly when, tired of carrying him and feeling that she was late, she hurried on. Before she entered the door she stooped to brush off the earth which had lodged on the back of his neck and shoulders.

"Be quiet, Turk! Be still, good dog! What a provoking little brute you are!" she cried, as Turk, fancying his mistress wanted to play, began his usual game of placing his breast on the ground and his tail in the air, jumping at her with his forelegs flat on the ground, as he went through as many gyrations as an opera dancer; the light quivered on some bright substance glittering at the end of one of his curls. She caught him up in her arms and carried him to her room to examine what it might be, uninterrupted. It was a ring of some kind. Turk was impatient at

her efforts to untie the hairs by which it was secured.

The light was waning, for twilight was softening into night, when she disengaged the ring and carried it to the window. Memories crowded on her brain, and made her reel with confused thought. It was an emerald surrounded by pearls which she had often admired on her mother's finger.

"Oh, mamma, mamma, it was your voice ! Mamma, mamma, all out in the dark !"

The first impulse was to rush out and find her. Poor mamma was come at last ; she wanted her little girl.

"Oh ! what a deaf, stupid dolt I was, not to pursue the voice at once !" She would return to the spot outside the woodland where she had heard the distant call. Reason whispered that her governess was waiting tea for her, and that she would be angry at the delay ; but reason was not listened to—she ran down, followed by Turk, and escaped by the drawing-room window on to the terrace and over the flower-beds without thinking of their crushed blossoms.

As she proceeded the light declined into deep shadows ; the air seemed eerie ; the long cry of the owl passed into the distance. Helena could not now perceive her path ; she lost her way, and came up to the iron sheep-fence, which she could not climb, nor, had she attained the opposite side, could she have found her way to the woodland.

"Turk ! Turk !" she cried to her only friend ; and he answered by putting his cold nose against her. She took her handkerchief from her pocket and passed the corner of it round his neck. "Home, good dog !—home !" she said, caressing him, and he turned his footsteps back and trotted before her, she not daring to lose sight of the white line of handkerchief by which she directed her course.

Her mamma would not have remained there now, she knew, when she found her child did not come to her—no doubt she had gone home. Where could her home be ? Not far—not far.

"Oh mamma, you could not go far away from me again !"

She was damp, cold, and dispirited when she reached the house. She rang the bell of her bedroom, and begged the housemaid to bring her a cup of hot tea. She had lost something she had discovered when she came from her walk, and she had been out to look for it; "but it was too dark," she said, "she supposed, and she could not find it;" and then her disordered spirits gave way, and she sobbed.

"Never mind, miss," said Johanna; "get off your damp clothes. Why you are just as if you had been dipped in water, from the fog and the wet grass. I will dry them, and get you a hot bottle and a cup of tea."

"Will you tell Miss Sable," said Helena, "that I can't come down to-night?"

"Yes, miss, I'll tell her as I go down. Please, Miss Sable," said Johanna, opening the door of the school-room, "Miss Vernon is not quite well this evening, and hopes you will excuse her—she is gone to bed."

"Ill is she? Does she want a doctor?" said Miss Sable, helping herself to the last

spoonful of jam sent up by the housekeeper for Helena.

“I daresay she will be better to-morrow, ma’am, after a good sleep—and a good cry,” Johanna added in a low voice as she shut the door.

CHAPTER III.

“ Her tongue is like a rolling river,
That murmuring flows, and flows for ever.”

THE next day Helena was silent and thoughtful during the hours she spent with Miss Sable. That young lady's system of teaching was, she said, not by books, but by talking to her pupils in the language she wishes them to acquire. As Helena knew but little French, and no German, she had only to listen, and her governess, being in good spirits, talked incessantly. Her pupil generally put monosyllables of assent or dissent in the wrong place ; but nothing could derange Miss Sable's sweetness. Whilst Helena had been hunting the woods in vain efforts to find her mother, her governess had been more agreeably employed ; so she went on with her personal narrative, sometimes in English, to the unwilling sense of her pupil.

"I was mistress of the establishment altogether, my mother being dead, when, would you believe it, my father, still young, became attracted by a blonde girl of twenty-two. He was going to marry her, when I represented it was quite impossible I could live in a house of which I was no longer mistress. He said one word—a short word in your tongue, two letters, 'Go.' It is two syllables in my language—'allez'—but it means the same. I wrote to an English lady I had once known at school, and she took me as a companion, till I could get a place, as instructress. *That* she obtained for me, also, with a lady very strict in having her daughters well taught. One day a letter came from my brother—'Would I come home and nurse my father. He said the blonde girl had what you call jeelted him at the last, and he had fretted so that he had fallen ill, and my brother thought he might die. He had the fever badly—would I not go and nurse him?'"

Helena became interested, in spite of her filial anxieties.

"Well?" she said, looking intently at made-moiselle, "you went, and found him?"

"Not at all—I did not go. Why should I? If he got well he would marry some one else, and if he died I should have no home. Ah no! I have the prudence."

"Oh, mam'selle, how could you!" cried Helena, who had always had a home, such as it was; always food and shelter.

"How I could? I could very well."

"And did he recover—your poor father?"

"No—he died—and, miss, you are darning that flounce *si*—what you call crooked."

"He died without being nursed by you!"

"What then? *She*—the blonde one—might have nursed him."

"Oh, mam'selle, you have a heart of stone!"

"Ha! ha!—you so think?" said the lady, gaily.

"Perhaps your brother nursed him," said the tender-hearted little girl, whose imagination represented the lonely man watching and listening for the footstep which came not.

"Very loike," said mam'selle, indifferently.

Miss Sable had met Doctor Abner whilst Helena was searching the woods for the bewildering voice of her lost mother. He had made his proposition about the lessons he wished to receive, but suggested that if Miss Sable had no objection he would apply to Lord Santly, whom he did not wish to offend, for permission to engross a couple of hours of Miss Sable's time twice a week.

The lady declared it was quite unnecessary to ask permission of his lordship, as her time was her own in the afternoons, because she gave it up to her pupil both during the morning and evening hours.

Then the Doctor and the Governess looked blankly at each other, and she uttered the words "but where?" and his face flushed crimson, and he said :

"I have a good sitting-room ; but——"

"Oh!" cried the lady, lifting both arms with an accent of horror, "*Les convenances*, the—what you call them—the proprieties forbid!"

"I was thinking," said the Doctor, "if we could get up a sort of class, it would be agreeable and more profitable to you. There is a widow lady who might lend us her room."

"No—pardon—I should prefer to hire a room for myself, where I could keep my books and some articles of clothing, in case I got wet from my walk. I should be independent, you see."

"You are wisdom itself," said the Doctor. "Shall I inquire if there be a convenient apartment in Oldchester? I think I know of one, if it has not been recently engaged."

"Many thanks, monsieur; but you see, would it not be as well to inquire first how many pupils are likely to honour me by their attendance? I should then know how much it would be worth my while to attend, and how much to charge each pupil."

Doctor Abner was glad that the fair creature was so straightforward. He had found it hitherto impossible to touch on the subject of remuneration; but, emboldened by this opening, he ventured to ask for how much an

hour would she think it worth her while to teach.

She replied, promptly, "Were it a single pupil, it would be five shillings for an hour; but as she hoped there might be more, she would say five shillings for two hours; for, at the same time, there was the hire of the room to be thought of. Perhaps Doctor Abner would absolve her from any anxiety on that account, and divide the expense between himself and the other pupils. If he were unsuccessful in obtaining any, the scheme, to her great regret," she said, demurely, "must fall to the ground."

In what a beaming state of mind the Doctor sought Mrs. Elming, after leaving Miss Sable! How benevolently he felt towards all mankind! and especially to the fair Emily and her mother. There was no head averted now from the cottage window. The Doctor, full of his desire to obtain pupils for mademoiselle, forgot that the ladies at the Ivy Cottage might have a design to marry him.

It so happened that Emily having, with many stifled sighs and concealed tears, finished the

manufacture of a flannel petticoat for old Mrs. Goody, had rolled it up and taken it to that ungrateful recipient of her bounty.

"'Tisn't over thick," said the old woman, rubbing the material between her fingers.

"It is the best I could afford, dame," said Emily, gently.

"Ah! very like. Poor and proud, eh?"

"Not much to be proud of, mother," said Emily, smiling.

Yet many would have been elated to possess that blooming beauty, and the youth which illumined it; but it is the nature of unrequited love to undervalue possessions which others would sigh for. The old woman grunted; she envied the possession of which the owner was careless.

So Doctor Abner found the widow alone. He looked round the room with an expression of disappointment which filled the widow's heart with exultation; but the Doctor was only thinking of a possible pupil for Miss Sable, and not a possible wife for himself.

"Miss Emily not at home?" he asked.

Mrs. Elming meant to be frozen and dignified, but the Doctor's cordial good temper thawed the coldness of which, in his eagerness, he was unconscious.

"We have not seen you for some time," said the lady.

"No?" asked the forgetful Doctor, interrogatively. "Ah! I've had one or two tiresome cases lately which have occupied my time. The Doctor always had tiresome cases, and he did not specify the names of the patients; but looking blandly at the widow, he observed: "I have been thinking much about you and Miss Emily lately."

The widow allowed her face to relax into an answering smile.

"Is he going to propose," she thought, "and suggest that I should live with them?" and she looked round, and determined that nothing but death should divorce her from her own cottage.

"Yes, a great deal, and very often," repeated the Doctor, who did not find it very easy to suggest to the mother that her daughter's edu-

cation was incomplete. However, it must be said, or indicated, and the Doctor was not a man to hesitate when anything disagreeable had to be done.

"You know, probably, that Lord Santly has a ward living with him, for whom he has engaged an experienced governess?"

"I did not know it," said Mrs. Elming.

This lady has her afternoons at her own disposal, for they are spent by her pupil in the library with his lordship. My knowledge is so limited of foreign languages—French and German—that I wish to institute a class here in Oldchester, if possible; and I thought that you and Miss Emily might join with me in starting it. The idea is to hire a room where the teacher might attend twice or thrice a week, for which we must manage to pay between ourselves. I do not suppose Mr. Dyer would charge much for the use of his drawing-room for two hours three times a week."

The widow looked down. She was disappointed.

"Emily had four French quarters at school.

I never heard her talk, for I never speak French, English comes so natural. I don't mean to say that we would refuse to be neighbourly, and to help you with the governess."

"Oh, not for the world would I have you do anything which you would not care to do for your own sake. Only all girls look forward to marriage; and a wife with a cultivated taste, able, as well as willing to assist her husband, is a prize that seldom falls to a busy man's lot. I have no doubt, madam, *your* French wants no brushing up; your late husband I know, possessed a most cultivated taste; and I feel convinced that in you he found his equal. There are several young ladies, daughters of my patients, who will be glad of the opportunity of valuable instruction. Miss Milfords, two of them; Miss Mudge, at the music shop; Miss Sleeman, the chemist's daughter. I only addressed myself to you first, you see, because you are of a different grade you know; but I would not for the world——"

"You need not take me up so short, Doctor Abner. I am sure Emily would like to learn

anything improving ; at my age French is not likely to be of any use, nor German either. I suppose you know the governess to be an experienced woman, and competent to teach French and German ? ”

“ I am *sure* of it,” he replied, “ or I should not be so eager to learn of her myself.”

The Doctor’s mare was impatiently pawing the soft earth from the side of the road. The Doctor, who bought cheap horses generally, rushed out and sprung into his cart.

“ Is she young or old ? ” cried the widow, pursuing him to the door.

“ I fear the mark is out of her mouth,” said the Doctor, looking at his mare.

“ Dear me ! ” cried the widow. “ What could he mean by that ? ”

The Doctor’s boy rushed past her to give him a message ; returning quickly, he touched his hat respectfully to Mrs. Elming.

“ A nice youth ; a very respectable establishment for Emily,” she thought.

CHAPTER IV.

“Quhair sall I get a bonny boy,
That will gie hose and shoon,
That will gae to Lord Bernard’s ha’,
And bid his lady cum ?”

BY-AND-BY Emily returned.

“Well,” asked the widow, “was old Goody pleased with her flannel petticoat ?”

“I think she was glad to get it, though she did not say much. She is not effusive of gratitude, you know.”

“I suppose,” replied the widow, “one ought not to look for it ; but one always does, and is always disappointed. But I have had a visitor.”

“Indeed !” said Emily, speaking quietly, but angry with herself, that the colour rushed over her cheeks and brow.

“Yes,” said her mother ; and she busied herself in wiping her glasses not to see the

blush. "Doctor Abner called on me to ask if we would join with him in making up a class to learn French and German."

"Yes, but who is to teach us? Does he know of a master?" asked Emily unsuspiciously.

"Not a master, but a mistress," replied the mother. "It seems that there is a governess at Lord Santly's who will give lessons to a class three times a week in this town—an experienced instructress."

"Oh, mamma, I am sure I should not like it at all! Is she young or old?"

"Well, my dear, he said she had had great experience. I suppose she might be about my age or older. I was determined to know, so I put the question, and he answered in such a coarse way, I really could not tell what to make of the Doctor."

"What did he say?" asked Emily in an awe-stricken manner.

"He said he feared that the mark was out of her mouth."

Emily turned this over in her mind; she was

as ignorant as her mother as to the meaning of the phrase.

Presently she strolled into the kitchen. Molly was sweeping up the cinders to throw them with a proper admixture of small coals on the top of the fire, when a sprinkling of water would be added, and the whole flattened down by the fire-shovel, to be fused by slow heat into an enduring and economical cake of fuel.

"Molly, when you say a lady has the 'mark gone out of her mouth,' what does it mean?"

"Lor, miss! Why it is only a horsy way of saying they are old. Men are so uncivil," she said, looking cross, as some memory of the phrase as applied to herself, passed through her mind.

"Then," reiterated Emily, "if a gentleman said it of a lady, he would mean she was oldish—as old as you, Molly?"

"I never have been counted old yet, miss—only middle-aged."

"I thought people were middle-aged at thirty-

five," observed Emily, thinking of Dante's statement.

"Humph!" said Molly, who did not wish to encourage the conversation, "I am what God pleases to make me, I suppose?" an amount of credence which would puzzle the most devout.

The result of this talk was, that Emily went back to her mother with less uneasiness, lest the coming governess should be the attractive young creature whom she had seen in the company of the Doctor. But she was unwilling to show the small amount of her knowledge, "four French quarters" going but a short way towards the acquisition of that language.

She was resolved to hear more about it before she consented to become a pupil on this unknown system.

In the meantime Helena wandered daily in the woods and coverts which skirted the park, in the hope of hearing something of that beloved voice which had pierced the evening air with her name. Where could she go to look for her mother? Two lines of poetry which she had read and remembered because

they were so applicable to herself, came spontaneously to her lips as she returned disappointed each evening from her search.

“Through the cold world unshrinking, thy steps to pursue,
And shield thee, and save thee, or perish there too.”

Her young perception had been grievously wounded by the way in which the old sexton had spoken of her mother and of herself—that mother whose memory was connected with shame, but who was more dear, if possible, for the reprobation of the world. That anyone should have ground of casting a reproach on her mother was a misery ; but, however sinful, she was hers, and she would throw her arms round her, and defy the world for her sake. The old man had solved many problems which had weighed on her as undiscovered puzzles. Mrs. Vandeleur’s contempt, the sneer of the house-agent, who said she *called* herself Lady Wynne ; her lonely uncared-for life !

“But if I could find mamma again, she would love me, and I should not care for any neglect besides.”

One day when she was crossing the park she

saw a little boy coming towards her. She was about to pass him, when he arrested her attention by crying—

“Staii ! Is your name Miss Vernon ?”

“Yes,” said Helena.

“Then the sick lady give me this to give you under the sly, so I do.”

Helena felt in her pocket for a threepenny bit, the only wealth she possessed, and presented it to the bearer.

“She did pay me,” said the boy ; but he took the coin nevertheless.

She tore open the dirty note, which bore witness to the absence of water from his toilette, and read as follows :

“DARLING HELENA,—If you have the power of doing it without observation, come and see your unhappy mother. The bearer of this will tell you where to find me.”

“Where is the lady who sent this ?” said Helena.

“In a shop in the High Street,” replied the boy. “Are you coming ?”

"Yes," replied the girl shortly, and she followed her conductor.

They walked so fast that Helena became breathless, but she panted on, and pursued Jack, as he was called, till they drew near the town. Then he turned suddenly, and with a quick wink, said :

"I know you."

"Do you?" asked Helena, wondering.

"You are the gal as was sent for when that poor chap was a-dying at Santly's farm. You had a little bundle, and you sat on the settle, and I peeped in at the window, a-wondering how long you'd sit there, and the poor chap a-dying upstairs. Bless you, I knew he was a-dying. Them don't cough like that if they are for liven', and she—she what sent me, she goes on dreadful. I hear her a-coughing when I go up to bed at night, and again when I wake in the morning. I warrant she don't get much sleep."

"Be silent ; you shall not say such things," said Helena, half-crying, and quickening her

pace to be able sooner to judge personally of her mamma's state.

The boy stopped when he reached a large shop with Dyer, grocer, on one side of the door, and Dyer, draper, on the other. He turned into the shop, saying to Helena, pointing to a dark passage :

"Along there, up first flight of stairs, first door right hand."

Helena obeyed, her heart beating almost to suffocation, for anxiety was added to her previous speed. There was a door as described by Jack. She knocked, and a well-known voice cried, "Come in." She opened it with a face blanched by nervousness, and in another instant was crushed to her mother's heart.

"Oh, Helena !" "Oh, mamma !" were sounds broken by passionate tears and sobs. Lady Wynne sat down, and Helena, sinking on her knees, buried her sad face in the folds of her mother's dress. The agitation brought on a paroxysm of Lady Wynne's cough, which, by its violence and recurrence, made Helena's heart sink with terror.

Then her mother lay back silently in the old arm-chair, too breathless and exhausted to speak, but smiling happily as she held her little girl's hand.

"Never, mamma, never again!" and her voice trembled. She would have said never again will we part, but she dreaded that a power mightier than the mightiest monarch might separate them. Helena looked at her mother with tender admiration.

"Oh, mamma, you are more beautiful than ever!" she said.

Lady Wynne smiled. She liked to be called beautiful. It was her due, for Helena was right, and her mother was lovelier than before, her eyes larger and more lustrous, her skin more delicate, and the tint of her cheeks of a more brilliant hue. She was dressed in a wrapping robe of white merino with blue stripes, which Helena remembered to have seen her wear in London; but it had been frequently washed, and the colours had faded. Her hair was simply brushed back and fastened

by a comb. She did not seemingly care for her appearance.

The room was over the shop, luckily the part dedicated to haberdashery, but the muslin curtains which hung from their rings were no longer white, having been the receptacle for the dust and smoke of many summers and winters. There was a bottle of cough mixture, and a glass and a spoon by her side. She saw Helena's eyes wander to it, and she said, smiling:

"Jack got it for me. He is very good."

This little speech, so innocently said, made the girl's heart ache, and told a tale of neglect which required no amplification.

"Jack?" she said in a low voice.

"Yes, Jack," replied Lady Wynne. "I shall always love that boy, for he has led you to me."

Helena thought of the wealth with which her mother had been surrounded when she last saw her—of her footman, carriage and horses, her maid, all the observances paid to the impersonation of wealth, and now of her

mother's gratitude to a small freckle-faced boy, who wore ragged corduroy trousers, an apron, and a muffin cap.

"Who waits on you, mamma?"

"Nominally the maid of all works; but those works are so manifold that it is not wonderful that she seldom finds time to answer the bell, and when she comes she is so dirty that I am glad when she goes down again."

"Poor dear mamma, I will wait on you! I shall be cleaner, though perhaps clumsy at first; but you will forgive your stupid girl, won't you? Who gets your dinner?"

"I don't want dinner; I have no appetite. Jack buys me sixpennyworth of buns every day. He brings them in a bag, so I know they are clean. They send me seven, and he has one for the trouble."

"My mamma, you must come away from this place. You must be where you can have proper food."

"No, my dear, don't propose it. It would worry me to move."

Helena was silent, not to worry her mother,

but she was puzzled to know why she would not leave a residence so uninviting.

"Perhaps I can make you more comfortable when I live here with you. I am a good cook."

Lady Wynne smiled, and sighed.

"I must not take you from your home with Lord Santly, my dear child ; you can be with me a part of every day, but you must not tell them that I am living here."

"Not ?" cried the girl.

"No, I should not like it—it must not be told."

"Oh, mamma !"

"Silence, Helena ! It shall not be done. Surely," she continued, breaking into a sob, "you would not contradict your sick mamma ?"

"Never—never, my own darling mother ! I will be guided by your slightest wish ;" and she nestled her head on to her mother's breast, and withdrew it, shocked by the frequent violent action of her heart. Lady Wynne patted Helena's neck, and caressed with her other hand Turk's brown head, who put in his

claim for notice, having been overlooked in all the agitation of the first meeting between the mother and child. "Poor Turk!—dear old fellow! I wonder if he thinks of the blue quilted satin petticoat he had of mine to lie on. Mamma?" asked Helena, timidly, "why did you leave that house without letting me know, without sending me a single message?"

"My dear, I wrote you a long letter, and told that woman Sophia to give you and Turk some tea, and to buy a cake; and I begged you to write to me, giving the address—and I thought my little girl so unkind not to write to me."

"There was no one," said Helena, with swimming eyes and a faltering tongue. Poor Turk was sitting outside the door half-starved, and the notion of Turk's sufferings made Helena go off into a paroxysm of sobbing.

Lady Wynne wept also. "When I came to London to seek for you I went to the last school you were at, and the housemaid told me where you were, and that the French teacher

had gone down to Lord Santly to be your governess. Then I came down and took lodgings here. I did not like to write to you, lest the Frenchwoman should open the letter, or perhaps Lord Santly. I wandered about, trying to attract your attention. I called you, but I could not tell whether you heard or not. Turk did, and came running towards me. I fastened my ring in one of the curls of his hair and told him to 'go home.' 'Helena,' I said to him, and he galloped back. Then I thought you would see the ring, and know that I was near, and come to me. I waited and waited; then I was tired, and sat down on the bank of a winding stream, and remained till it was too dark to distinguish anything. It was dreary. My few minutes' intercourse with Turk had seemed like company, which reminded me of a home, which I have not had since I left London."

The girl kissed her mother's soft cheek in sympathy. "When I got up," Lady Wynne continued, "I felt shivered, and this went on for hours. The girl had let the fire out here, and I

went to bed, and was ill for several days. I am quite well now, but for the cough, and that is better, and will soon go now."

Helena tried to feel comfort at this assurance, as many have done under similar circumstances. The patient must know best, they think—and they are frequently right.

"Did you send for a doctor, my dear mamma?"

"No," said Lady Wynne, carelessly. "Why should I? I lay in bed, and nursed myself. Mary, the maid-of-all-work, left my bedroom door open when she went out. I could not ring, for there is no bell in my room now—it broke, and I could not get out, because there was such catch of pain in my breathing when I tried to get up."

"And what did you do?" asked Helena.

"Jack went whistling past my room, and I called him. He was too polite to come further than the door, till I wished that he should take his orders from the side of the bed. I told him to say at some chemist's shop that he wanted some cough-mixture for a lady who

was ill in bed. I gave him a shilling to pay for it, and sixpence for himself; and he assured me that he would always run errands for me, only that he could not always come back directly, because he had to carry out goods for the shop. But I really loved his freckled face, round eyes, and pug nose. When, on my giving him directions how to recognise you, he told me that he knew you very well."

"I did not know *him*," observed the girl.

"Probably not—you are a young lady, you see, the only one in a great house, and he is one out of many ugly, common young boys." A clock was heard to strike, and Helena started. "I must go now—I shall only be in time if I run all the way."

"Go! go!" cried Lady Wynne, eagerly.

"You see," said the girl, breathlessly, tying on her hat, and dragging her visite round her shoulders, "I go to Lord Santly to do accounts every afternoon, but to-morrow, my mamma, I will return to you."

One short embrace, and Helena was flying

down the stairs, followed by Turk, and Lady Wynne sank back in her chair to give way to the fit of coughing she had suppressed during the girl's stay, lest it should distress her.

CHAPTER V.

“The troublous day—the long distressful dream.”

THE pleuritic pain got worse that evening, and Lady Wynne was glad to send Jack again to the chemist for linseed, and to the grocer's shop below for a half pound of mustard. The chemist “booked it” willingly, but the master of the shop sent an insolent message that he must have the money before my lady had the mustard, for she was behindhand with her rent two weeks. Jack, without scruple, delivered it to the lady—for the poor have no scruples of delicacy—who, taking a sixpence and a four-penny piece out of her purse, gave it that he might pay his master.

“Three guineas, and an exorbitant bill for coals! How can I pay it?” speculated the poor lady.

Then she reviewed her past life sadly, and with the insight born of failure and experience. Fever quickened into a second life the scenes of the past. There was the harsh widowed aunt, Lady Barre, who had hated her because she was beautiful. Her aunt had been clever too, cleverer than herself, and levelled at her sad niece such volleys of sarcastic witticisms, that she had sat ever silent and abashed under their unrelenting fire. Her poverty was an unpardonable crime—each result of it was urged singly, and, in the aggregate, against her. As she was young, she was to make herself useful, and was sent to walk miles of streets to match a yard of ribbon ; but as shoes under those circumstances will wear out, she was bitterly reproached for treading one down more than the other—a fact which was true, but which resulted from weakness in the left knee, a fault which nature rectified after two years had passed over her.

She remembered one walk especially, Lady Barre was trimming a bonnet. Three-quarters of a yard of ribbon was required to complete it.

The aunt had bought a remnant cheap, and she had thought it would be easily matched, for it was shot with black and white, the white silk being the woof, the black the warp.

With a bit of the ribbon pinned on a piece of paper, and the paper attached to the girl's cotton glove, she went out one morning to match the ribbon, and after walking about till she was so tired that she could scarcely stand, she returned to communicate her want of success. By that time Lady Barre had finished the bonnet, all but the absent three-quarters of a yard of ribbon, and was sitting waiting, armed with threaded needle, scissors, and thimble, and turned an aggressive face of expectation to the door as Claudine entered. The girl sat down on the chair nearest to the door.

"Upon my word, you sink into your chair with the air of an injured heroine of romance."

"Do I, aunt? I am rather tired."

"Where is the ribbon?"

"I have not got it."

"Not got it! Why not, pray?"

"I could not match it."

"Not match it! Then you must be a fool!"

"Yes, aunt."

"I am a fool myself to have been such an idiot. Such an expense, and no repayment in any way. It *must* be matched. I have finished the bonnet all but that."

Claudine was still silent. "Nothing could be easier to match than black and white threads running transverse," said the lady.

"This is the nearest match, and this is far off the colour," and Claudine produced a bit of ribbon from her glove, woven according to the stipulated pattern, but the black threads were blue-black instead of brown-black, and the transverse threads of white were thicker than in the pattern. This gave a different and lighter tint. Lady Barre saw what made the difference, but she believed that Claudine might have matched the ribbon if she had chosen, and observed that nothing was well done that she did not do herself, and that she did not doubt but that the hours of her niece's absence had been spent in loitering at the print shops, or at the jewellers' windows.

Then came the wooing of her first husband, a middle-aged man, exceedingly wealthy and very coarse. He coveted the young beauty, and courted her with laces and jewels which she had longed for ; but never, in her wildest hopes, had thought of obtaining.

Her aunt had taken good care that she should never hear that she was beautiful, so that she felt a certain amount of gratitude for the rich gentleman who was civil enough to wish to marry her. They married. The sick lady saw in her mind's eye, the wealth lavished on that sacrifice. The horrible loathing that sickened her when she stood at the altar by her husband's side, and felt that it was irrevocable.

The triumph of her wealth and beauty. Her husband's carelessness, and then his inconstancy. His prolonged absence on the continent, where he declared that business detained him, whilst pleasure and inconstancy towards her were the causes of the delay. Then she thought of her lover, Sir Atheline. How beautiful he had been ! She pressed her hot eyes against the pillow, as if to shut out that face, so rich in its

youthful loveliness, so pained by her petulance, so frenzied by her desertion. Sir Atheline, the father of her girl, whom in a fit of jealous rage she had fled from, because he had declared, in a fit of anger, that her rival had always possessed his heart.

The disgrace was no sooner incurred, than repented of. Sir Atheline had made no attempt to procure divorce, thus Lord Wynne could not repair the wrong he had committed by marrying his friend's wife, for Lord Wynne was the Captain Thornycroft of former days, who had culminated the amount of his many treacheries towards Sir Atheline by carrying off his wife. When Mr. Fairlight died, Claudine had succeeded to his large property, but she had had no settlement made of it on herself, when she married Sir Atheline Vernon. He seemed to have but one object, namely, to spend it. She had no power to restrain him. He was generally sweet-tempered, but always wilful. Thus when she left him for the protection of Lord Wynne, which was the title to which Captain Thornycroft had succeeded on the death of an

uncle, she was entirely dependent on him for maintenance, having only a few hundreds of her own standing in his name, and her jewellery. She had taken her infant with her ; but Sir Atheline had obtained possession of the child, and refused to give her up to her mother. This was Claudine's first bitter punishment ; but Lord Wynne was very much devoted to her, and strove, by every means in his power, to lighten her melancholy. At length he grew weary, and went abroad, leaving her in London ; she was well supplied with money by Lord Wynne, and had been too much accustomed to living alone during her marriage with Mr Fairlight to care for that fact ; but she felt that she had fallen from the station in which she had formerly lived.

Far from having her company sought, she was not received by any woman of respectability. Sir Atheline also sank into a lower grade of society. He had not been divorced, and was not eligible as a husband, or he would have been better received ; for his good looks, and the remains of Claudine's money, and his

title, would have inspired many women with the conviction that he only wanted to be properly managed to insure his being an excellent husband ; but a husband he was resolved not to become. Thus he drifted into poverty, ill-health, and death.

He had felt tenderly towards his little girl, when he thought of her ; but he would not curtail an extravagance for her sake, nor drink one glass of brandy-and-soda the less.

When Claudine recognised her daughter and the loving feelings of maternity, which had been so violently down-trodden, sprung up again in vivid force, she heard also of Sir Atheline's death, and left London to join Lord Wynne, in the hope that he would marry her at once, when with that lacquer of respectability she would have ventured to take her daughter to live with her, which otherwise she dared not do for the child's sake. But when she reached Italy she found Lord Wynne a gouty, irritable invalid, entirely under the domination of a black-eyed Italian. For Helena's sake she tried to bear the indignities to which she was sub-

jected ; but at length she could stay no longer. A cheque for fifty pounds wrung from the meanness of the man who had once worshipped her, was all she had, and by aid of this she had come to fulfil her dearest wish, to see her child once more.

Pride and shame made her insist on concealment. Love for Helena compelled her to insist on the girl's doing nothing to forfeit the friendship of Lord Santly, as on him must her future welfare depend. For herself it did not matter ; she knew that she had not long to live, and hoped that the few trinkets she possessed might suffice to take her to the gates of death. She was content to die, and only hoped that the suffering would not be extreme.

Helena had one thought as she flew along the road, into and through the park with Turk careering before her, and this was comprised in the word "locket." The locket was the point of sight ; all other things were but dimly distinguished as they circled round it. When she arrived at the mansion she flung off her

hat and smoothed her hair, and went to Lord Santly's library.

"The king was in the parlour counting out his money," she said to herself.

In truth, though Lord Santly was not a miser he looked very like one, leaning over a fireproof-box and placing within it bags of sovereigns which had just been paid in on a mortgage, and which he meant to keep by him till he could get an investment more productive than Consols. He raised himself from the stooping position in which he deposited the bags in the box, and said :

"Here you are—just in time. Put these bags in for me, counting as you go."

Helena did so, and, by his direction, locked the heavy cover down securely, and gave Lord Santly the key, which he attached to his watch-chain. Then Helena did his accounts, farming and household, all the time thinking of her mamma and of the brooch. It was a long walk to and from Oldchester, and she could do nothing that evening. The shops would be shut, even if she could reach the city ; so she

could only look at the trinket in its soft bed of purple velvet, and think with a pang of parting with it. She did not doubt but that as soon as it was seen she should have customers out-bidding each other to possess such a piece of perfection ; but she could only go to bed early and hope for doing great things on the morrow.

CHAPTER VI.

"If thou could know what 'tis to weep,
To weep unpitied and alone
The live-long night, whilst others sleep
Silent and lonely watch to keep,
Thou wouldst not do as I have done."

AFTER the child had left her mother, the unhappy Claudine had another visitor. Mr. Dyer gave an unceremonious knock at the door of her bedroom, and, on hearing a feeble voice say "come in," he entered, and, taking a chair, sat down opposite the lady.

"I thought I might make bold to come in, seeing as how Jack has the run of the room, but *some sorts* ain't particular."

"What do you want?" said Claudine, flushing at the insult, and then turning pale again at the thought that she had not wherewith to satisfy him.

"Well, look you here! 'Tis over two weeks'

rent you owe me for this room, and I want my money."

"Give me time," gasped the sick woman.

"Time! time! Wait till you're in your grave, perhaps. Who'll pay me then?"

"Who, indeed," Claudine thought.

"Well! I won't turn you into the street, but I've got an offer to let this room to some literary gentlemen and ladies twice a week, and I shall be sure of my money from them. There is a little room at the back where you may go, and pay ten shillings a week less."

"Oh, dear! I should be stifled in that closet," said the poor lady.

"Beggars must not be choosers, it seems to me. It is that or nothing. A gent is coming to-morrow to look at the room; so you'd better be prepared."

Thus saying, he left the room, and Claudine had to chew the cud of bitter fancies all night, till sleep came to repeat them in troubled dreams.

CHAPTER VII

"Oh ! what was love made for if 'tis not the same,
Through joy, through sorrow, through glory, or shame ?"

THE morning Helena gave to Miss Sable's attendance. Miss Sable chattered in French incessantly, and Helena thought in English. In the afternoon she was free to seize her locket, and go with it to Oldchester.

When she arrived she went to the largest jeweller's shop, and, producing her carefully-guarded locket, she asked the shopman to buy it.

He called his master, who looked carefully at the trinket, and then suspiciously at the young girl, the plainness, not to say shabbiness, of her clothes not indicating her right to the possession of anything so costly.

"It is worth a great deal of money," said Helena.

Mr. Lewes looked at the name of the London jeweller printed on the case in gold letters.

"What do you want for it?"

"A great deal of money; but could you give me some at once?"

"How much do you want for it all together?" asked the jeweller.

"I know how much it cost, but I suppose you won't give me that. Will you give me ten pounds?"

"No. I will give you five."

"Oh, dear! I know it is worth fifteen times five; but give me five, and keep it for me, and I will pay you back the five, and ten shillings besides, if I can get the money."

To this the jeweller consented, and gave Helena five sovereigns.

She looked back, with the money grasped in her hand, on the beautiful jewel which the man was still contemplating, and she had hardly turned the corner when Miss Sable entered the street, having been outstripped by Helena, for

Miss Sable had the idea of walking like a true goddess, and Helena, having no thought beyond getting to the end of her journey, had fled along the park and road with the speed of an Italian greyhound.

Miss Sable was made very beautiful for the occasion. She was to meet Doctor Abner, and see whether poor Claudine's bedroom would do for the school-room in which she was to teach her classes of French and German twice a week in the afternoons.

"The room is occupied just at present, but the lady will go out to-morrow, so you can come and see it, Doctor, and you also, Miss."

He escorted them up, and, knocking first in an authoritative way, he flung the door open, and revealed the room and its occupant.

Claudine was sitting upright in a chair, called easy, with a small hand resting on the table near her, that the intruders might not see how it shook from agitation and weakness. She bowed her head slightly in return for the profound obeisance of the Doctor. Miss Sable took no notice of the invalid; she went to the

table on which Claudine rested her hand, and shook it violently.

"This will not do at all, Mr. Dyer—not big enough—not steady enough. I like not anything not steady. I love not shakee, shakee—spoil the writing—make crooked."

"Certainly, miss. I will have a suitable table, and how many chairs might you want?"

Doctor Abner turned to Lady Wynne.

"Pray, do not inconvenience yourself to meet our arrangements, madame. This is Wednesday. We shall not begin our studies till to-morrow week."

Miss Sable began a protest.

"*To-morrow week*," said the Doctor, emphatically, "will be the first day on which *I* can attend."

Miss Sable ceased to argue the matter.

Lady Wynne bowed her head in recognition of the Doctor's politeness.

"'Twill take some time to get the place put to rights," said the owner, sullenly.

They then left the bed-chamber.

"And," the Doctor added to the landlord, "I

would not hurry that poor lady. She won't trouble anyone long."

"I'll trouble *her*," replied the man, savagely, "if she don't pay me what she owes for rent. 'Tis enough to give a bad name to the lodgings to have a woman come dying on my premises. Who will take the lodgings afterwards, I should like to know?"

Doctor Abner and Miss Sable had got into the street by this time, and Helena watched them safely away before she went up to her mother.

Lady Wynne looked flushed and worried, but Helena kissed her and patted her cheek, and said :

"Mamma, I have some money. How much do you owe Mr. Dyer?"

"Oh, my darling! more than you can pay, I fear."

"Look!" said the girl, triumphantly.

"Where did you get it?" asked her mamma.

"Your locket; the one you gave me with the brilliants."

"My poor darling, did you only get five

sovereigns for *that*? It is worth fifteen times that sum."

"Yes; but, mamma, he lent me that on the locket, and I can get it back, when you have more money, by paying a few shillings for the loan of the five pounds."

Claudine smiled sadly.

"Yes, my darling," she said, kindly; but in her heart she knew not when she should ever have any more sovereigns.

"Will you not pay him, mamma? I gave up the locket on purpose," she added, with a quiver on her lip.

"Yes, my dear. Will you go down and ask him to bring up his bill, and he shall be paid?"

Helena went down to search for this forbidding man, whom she had proved to be a cheat, and whom she knew hated her consequently.

"Please to come up and speak to Lady Wynne and bring your bill, and she will pay you."

"Lady Wynne! A fine lady, truly!"

Helena took no notice of this insolence.

"I am too busy to go dancing up after her

nonsense, and the shop full of people. Here is the bill ; bring me the money, and I will receipt it."

Not quite two pounds were left when the bill was paid and receipted.

"Mamma, I know such a nice lodging out of the town. Do let me take it for you. It is only a cottage, but there is a pleasant, clean-looking widow-woman, to whom the house belongs. Let me take it for a week. It is only twelve shillings for one room."

"Yes, if you will, my dear. I think I should breathe better out of the close houses."

On the following day Helena brought a fly, and the maid-of-all-work lifted Lady Wynne into it, and in twenty minutes she was transported to the small cottage, which proved to possess all the advantages with which Helena had accredited it.

Claudine, stretched out on the small bed, looked with quiet satisfaction on the monthly roses that danced their clusters in the summer breeze.

Helena occupied herself in arranging her mother's small wardrobe, with due regard to the

limited space ; and, begging Mrs. Wallace to give attention to Lady Wynne in case she wanted anything, she kissed her, and, placing an orange by her side, she proceeded to the door, but came back to look once more, with the uneasy feeling of an animal who has left her offspring in a strange place, and is doubtful of its safety.

How Helena loathed the long mornings passed with Miss Sable, who had the frivolous soul of the apprentice of a French milliner imprisoned in a stately mansion of oak, with a young girl who never had had time for the expansion of her feminine instincts of adornment. To care for dress, one must feel the happy consciousness of the possibility of being admired.

Helena had the pervading conviction that the only creature she loved, excepting Turk, was ill. Jack had said that she would die, or had implied it. Helena turned her thoughts away from that conviction, but there was one distressing certainty—that eleven-and-sixpence was all her and her mother's joint wealth. She had paid the twelve shillings for the lodging in

advance. A week would soon glide away, and in the meantime there was food and washing to be paid for. She would ask her dear mamma to-morrow for permission to appeal to Lord Santly, or to Lady Gower. Surely, they would not refuse what her mamma so much required.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ And oh ! if thou can’st tell how drear
When friends are cold, and youth is gone,
The world would to thine eyes appear
If thou, like me, to none were dear,
Thou would’st not do as I have done.”

WHILST Helena’s thoughts were thus sadly occupied, Miss Sable tried, speaking English, to nail her attention to the subject of an artificial rose which she was placing at the side of her hat.

“ Look, miss. It is here ” (holding it by the side). “ You like it ? ”

“ Yes, very much. It is very pretty.”

“ Very *preety*, yes ; but I—does it make me more preety ? ”

“ Now look ; a little bit more forward. Now, you see, where I at present place it, the yellow and brown leaves carry off the tint of the skin. Clear brunette,—which you think is best ? You

see, with the rose further back the colour of the skin is positive ; with the rose in sight, it is comparative."

"Mademoiselle," said Helena, forced into attention, "the face is a beautiful object, the rose is another ; I would rather see two than one."

"Ah!" said the governess, quite appropriating the compliment ; "but you enter not into the intricacies of the question."

"I am very stupid, I know that," said Helena, whose thoughts were with her mother's slender purse. And Miss Sable, finding her hopeless, placed the rose where she herself preferred it.

When Helena saw her mother next day she was shocked at the change in her appearance. She smiled and smoothed Helena's tumbled hair, and patted Turk's head, but the orange was untouched, and she seemed disinclined to speak. She was exhausted by coughing, and was unwilling, by moving or speaking, to provoke a repetition of the attack. It was difficult to know how to act. Mrs. Wallace made a sign

to her to come out and speak to her. Helena followed with a beating heart.

“Miss ——”

“Vernon,” said Helena, as they walked down the path of the little garden at the back of the house, into which the window looked of the room in which Claudine was lying. They stopped at a summer-house, where the widow sometimes took her tea, persuading herself that she liked it better than in her little parlour. Within this she stood with a kind of plump dignity, a travestie of Rob Roy’s feeling—“My foot is on my native heath, and my name’s Macgregor.”

Helena, sad, drooping, and shabbily dressed, stood by her side, her eyes staring, till they ached, on nasturtiums and michaelmas daisies, which she saw without perceiving, so terrified did she feel as regarded the blow which she felt must come, in what Mrs. Wallace was about to observe.

“My dear,” said the woman, confidentially, “would you not like to have a doctor to see your ma? She coughed all night, so that I

could not sleep a wink. The walls is thin, my dear, and 'tis well I have good health, and don't mind a trifle, or the hack, hack, hacking going on all night, and then going so quick, that I thought the poor lady would never get her breath again, is enough to drive one crazy. As it was, I put my flannel petticoat over my head, not to hear, and slept well enough."

Something of Helena's feeling as to the selfishness of this conduct appeared in her face.

"Well ! I could do her no good by a-listening," she said ; "and this is what I wanted to say—should she not have a doctor ? Doctor Abner is a nice gentleman ; he would not charge much just for coming in to see what could be done."

Helena caught at this idea. "But I must hear from mamma first if she minds. I can't vex mamma."

So it was settled.

"Perhaps mamma had no cough-mixture last night ?"

"Yes ; she finished the bottle—maybe there was not enough."

Then Helena hastened back to her mother's

side, where Turk was outstretched, while the thin hand of the invalid was placed on his rough head. Turk was a ragged, disreputable-looking dog, whose keen, brown eyes had a look of drollery in them, which inclined the spectator to laugh. He retained his position undisputed, feeling sure his dearest mistress would return in a short time.

When Helena took her place by her mother's side, she said, softly :

"My dear mamma had a troubled night?"

"Not very," was the reply.

"Would my mamma like to see a doctor?"

"No!" was said, decidedly. "Go and get cough-mixture for me. No Jack here."

Helena went at once, and asked the chemist if it might not be made stronger.

"I fear it will disorder the patient's brain, stupefy her, if I give more of the opiate; and the cough must come, or suffocation ensues."

"Then give it as it was mixed before," said Helena, and took the bottle back to her mother.

Mrs. Wallace came in, and announced that if

miss was going to sit with her ma she should like to go into the town for a few errands ; and Helena was glad, as she wished to speak to her mother without a chance of being overheard.

She waited for some time, for Claudine seemed to slumber from time to time.

"Mamma," she said, at length, fearful of the return of the widow. "Mamma, I wish you would let me ask Lord Santly, or Lady Gower, for some money for you. I was called Helena after her, I believe—surely she would help us."

A deep flush passed over Claudine's face, and a look of mental pain and vexation ; but she was partially under the effect of the opiate ; and the flush faded, and the thought ceased to affect her.

Helena did not know why her mamma was so sleepy. She waited a little while, and then said :

"Pray, let me ask Lord Santly or Lady Gower. If they knew my mamma had so little, they would give her some."

"Never ! I forbid it ! Let me escape that pang—obliged to *her* ! *Never*, Helena ! I will

not have it done. Go and leave me—you make me worse.”

Helena wept silently, whilst her mother closed her eyes, exhausted.

Presently she looked up, and said :

“You will find paper and pen and ink in that box ; take a sheet and write ——”

Helena obeyed.

“I hoped never to apply to you again, but I am dying, and I have no money. Send me fifty pounds by the return of the post. It will do to pay the little I owe, and to bury me. I forgive you, and bid you adieu.”

Helena sobbed as she wrote.

“Now, give me the sheet and a book to lean on, that I may sign it.”

The tremulous, crooked signature was a strong contrast to Helena’s firm handwriting.

“Do you think the person will send the money ?” she asked, timidly.

“Yes,” Lady Wynne replied, indifferently.

“Can you have an answer soon ?”

Her mother did not reply ; she was slumbering again.

When Helena took the letter to the post, she asked the postmaster how long it would be before an answer could be received. He replied, in three days, if it came by the return of the post. And the girl ran over, in her mind, how long their money might be supposed to last ; and, tired of worrying fruitlessly, she gave up the vain disquietude—for how could she alter it ?

She sat silently by her mother's side, Turk stretched on the bed, with his head under the invalid's hand.

"Leave him with me when you go. He will be company."

"Yes, mamma," the girl replied, quietly. Then, in a very low voice, "I am going now. Good-bye."

She got to the door on tiptoe lest Turk should find out she was going, but before she had run a quarter of a mile, Turk was bounding before her, and she dared not go back lest she should be late.

When he missed his little mistress, he re-

pelled Claudine's caresses, and barked, whined, and scratched at the closed bedroom door so continuously, that Mrs. Wallace opened it, and he rushed out after Helena. Claudine wept tears of weakness and disappointment. "Not even the dog loves me, now," she said.

Then Helena returned to Lord Santly, and aided him in the care and accumulation of wealth, which he seemed to love for its own value. Again she checked his accounts, and made herself so useful, that she longed to ask him to give her some of the money she saved for him. But Reason told her that she was tolerated simply because she worked without pay. She wished he would grudge paying for the governess. Helena did not like her, and would have been glad to have had her mornings to be given to her mamma.

CHAPTER IX.

"A foot more fleet, a step more true
Ne'er from the heath flower dashed the dew ;
E'en the small harebell raised its head,
Elastic from her fairy tread."

ON the following day Helena took a short cut through the woods to reach her mother sooner, as Miss Sable had kept her sewing for her longer than usual to finish a dress.

She went along treading with the swift feet of youth, when a succession of short gasps proved that Turk was in the joyful pursuit of some prey. She saw his hind legs disappearing over some fern, and the brown fringe of his tail ; whilst farther on in front of him the grass was agitated by some bounding creature which Helena could not distinguish.

"Oh ! Turk ! Turk ! bad dog ! Turk !
Back, sir ! come back !"

If Turk neard, he heeded not. His eyes and heart were wrapt up in strong desire to possess the fluffy creature, who, by sudden turnings, disconcerted her enemy. Now Helena ran and shrieked her command, and bounded over the brushwood in a vain effort to reach and seize the truant. Terror was added to anxiety, for a stone quarry was in the direction taken by the hare, and it was so precipitous that if Turk fell over he would probably break a limb, if he were not killed. Away they went, but now the hare had turned towards the stream of water which ran through the park, followed by Turk, Helena after them ; blind moles shrank away into their deepest recesses at the clatter of footsteps over their quiet halls ; the water-hen rose with a discordant shriek as her covert was intruded on ; the dragon-fly, poising its blue-mailed body on the bending top of a reed, expanded its gauzy wings, and circled round the fugitives ; a water-rat dived suddenly at the sight of Turk, believing that her last hour was come ; a mother-flycatcher, wearied with her efforts to supply the wants of her four

nestlings, who had missed the last fly from exhaustion, now saw the whole covey of her game disappear at the whisk of Turk's feathery tail. Now the hare turned again and sought the upland. Helena's mouth was too parched, and her breath too difficult to have any to expend in rating Turk. He evidently did not hear, or did not care; up they went; and though they still sped swiftly, Helena was reduced to a crawl rather than to a walk, as she was lower than the pursuer and the pursued; their figures were shown against the horizon as they skirted the edge of the quarry, then a clump of fir-trees intervened, and some ferns growing at their roots, and Helena could see no more of the fugitives.

Panting and discouraged, she came up expecting to find that the hare, entangled in the dried fern-leaves, had become a prey of the caitiff Turk; but finding nothing of them, her heart sank within her.

Seeing a broken-down tract through the ferns towards the edge, she gave a bitter cry, suspecting the truth; then, with one arm

embracing one of the firs that leaned at the brink of the quarry, she looked down and saw quite low a brown mass, which might be dead leaves and tangled weeds, but it was on the rough stones with no living vegetation near it. Then she gave a sad, long, agonised cry of "Turk!" and she thought the heap moved. She could not get down the precipitous sides from the place where she stood, but she might go round; and running and crying, and dashing away her tears to see which way she could soonest reach him, she went on towards the bottom of the quarry. That which looked so smooth at a distance, was a tract of sharp granite fragments, over which she stumbled to get up to what she now perceived was really Turk and his prey—the hare. He had seized her as she had sprung over in the despair of her terror. He had died in the pleasure of success, she had ceased to feel the agony of defeat.

Helena sat down and took her favourite in her arms. The poor head hung helplessly on either side, as she lifted the body. Showers of her tears fell over it.

"No one cared for you but myself, my Turk!" and her sobs redoubled. She felt what Gray expressed with a feeling so true to nature :

"My lonely sorrows melt no heart but mine."

That there was no sympathy with her grief redoubled it.

There was a recess in the side of the quarry where a larger stone than the rest had been dug out. She wrapped her handkerchief round Turk with vain carefulness, and laid him in the recess, placing stones to fill up the entrance.

She took the hare up, thinking that if seen the gamekeeper might come down and examine the cause of death, and disturb the grave of her darling.

Carrying it along in one hand, and wiping her tears away with the other, she went to the cottage of Mrs. Wallace.

"You are late, miss. Your mamma has been a-worriting after you."

"Is she—just the same, Mrs. Wallace?"

Helena had a superstition against using the word "worse."

"Much as usual, my dear ; but what a nice hare ! Is that for your ma ?"

"It is for you if you like to have it," said the girl.

"Oh ! thank'ee, miss. I'll roast it, and perhaps the lady may like a little slice. I've got a pot of currant jelly ; we shall have a fine feast of it."

Helena heard not half of this rejoicing. She saw her mother's face softening from an expression of weariness into a smile of satisfaction as Helena appeared.

"You are late, my dear ; and, oh ! how hot and tired !"

"Yes, mamma. I am very sorry I have kept you, I could not come sooner."

"It does not matter," said her mamma, with a faint smile. "I am not very busy, you know. When folks are idle they always are exact in what they require from others. But you, my child, are all the world to me—all that I have for happiness. I hope Lord Santly will continue to be kind to you."

"Yes, I daresay he will," Helena said,

faintly. "He suspects everyone of cheating him, and he is not far wrong. He depends on me for finding out how they try to rob him. I wonder if I could ever care for money as he does; only I want it sometimes?"

"Everyone," said Claudine, "loves or likes for some advantage they derive from the object of the loving or liking. There are only two creatures who love on through ill-usage and neglect—mothers and dogs."

Helena laid her dishevelled head on the bed to conceal the tears that the last reference to her deceased favourite called forth. She was fearful that her mamma would inquire why Turk had not come, and could not think of anything to say to turn Lady Wynne's thoughts in another direction; but her mother's hands were smoothing the ruffled ringlets of the girl's hair.

"It is just like in texture that of your poor father," she said at length.

Helena longed to say that her poor papa's watch had had a little dog cut out in paper inside it, but she feared to speak of it. It was

an unknown country, and Helena did not know what ghosts she might call up from its shadows to sadden her mother, who seemed unusually tranquil.

“Can you sing, Helena?”

“Yes, mamma, I can sing, but I have never been taught.” Then she began softly, but with her voice increasing in volume as she went on—
“Slumber and dream of all bright happy things,”
and “When the swallows homeward fly.”

“You have a beautiful voice, my child,” said the mother, and then she wept; for she thought, had I put up with Atheline, and acted rightly, Helena might have had the advantages of good tuition. She forgot that from the reckless extravagance of both parents, Helena might have been destitute of bread to eat or clothes to cover her.

CHAPTER X.

“Thou, only thou, my child, will feel regret
My blasted hopes and early fate deplore ;
And whilst my faults thou’lt palliate or forget,
Will half rejoice I feel that fate no more.”

“Oh, Helena ! I would have done so differently if I could have lived my life over again.”

“You will yet live a long time, my mamma, to make me happy in being with you.”

Claudine did not answer, for she seemed to listen, and said presently :

“How finely those choristers are singing that anthem from the burial service, ‘In the midst of life we are in death.’”

“Do you hear choristers, mamma ?”

“Yes ! do you not hear ? There ! ‘From whom shall we seek for succour but from Thee, O God ! who for our sins art justly displeased.’”

The summer afternoon had faded into twilight. The birds had twittered their last farewell, and a soft mist was rising from the earth, wrapping all objects in a silvery veil. The sounds heard by Claudine were but in her busy brain. The fever, usual to her complaint, had set in, and she muttered and slumbered, sometimes addressing some unseen object in words of tenderness and reproach.

Mrs. Wallace came to the door, and made a sign to Helena to come and speak to her.

"My dear miss," she said, "surely I had better speak to a respectable woman to come and be with your mamma at night. I could not undertake to sleep with her, for I am stirring about all day."

"You do not think mamma is worse?" said Helena, out of breath with apprehension.

"No, no—not worse; but last night it made me uncomfortable to hear the poor lady talking to herself, and moaning and muttering. Better have a respectable nurse, miss; one shilling for the day, and two shillings for a night, sitting up, and her meals."

This seemed a terrible expense—an unknown quantity, as mathematicians would say.

“Could you let the nurse have what is right, Mrs. Wallace, and I would pay you again?” and Helena thought of the letter, and the fifty pounds she hoped it might contain.

“Oh, yes, miss! Certainly you could give me a few shillings just to begin with,” she added.

Helena gave her ten shillings, leaving only a few pence. She foresaw that Mrs. Wallace would require to be paid at the beginning of the next week in advance. But she dared not stay to think; she kissed her mother’s burning hand, and then fled away into the shadows.

It was dark as she entered the woods of Saints Ley, and lights were gleaming from the windows of the old house, as she approached it. She went to the school-room, to be received with a shower of reproaches by mademoiselle.

“You are bad child. Milor—he rage. ‘Miss Vernon—not in? You are no use’—he, milor, say. I—*I even* am no use—not perform my duty to you—not know where you are.

‘Milor,’ say I, ‘I will do it, for what she do, I can do.’ He gave a snarl, altogether what you call ugly ; and he say ‘Not for me ;’ and then he have the bell rang—great bell at the top of the house ; and here you are, and where have you been, I would know ?”

“Will my lord see me now ?”

“No, he will not,” said Miss Sable, answering for him.

Helena rang the bell, and on its being answered by Albert, she said :

“Will you be so good as to tell my lord that I have returned, and ask him if I am any use to him now ?”

Albert brought a message back, that his lordship would speak with Miss Vernon on the following morning.

“Now you tell me where you did go, whilst I drink my tea.”

“I went a long way round in the park where I had never been before, and I could not get back in time.”

“Milor, he is one old fool !” said Miss Sable, frankly.

“Can I do any sewing for you, Miss Sable?” asked Helena, meekly.

“Well, my dear, these handkerchiefs, they should have beautiful satin stitch in the corners. You see my letters all sprouting with roses and pinks. I will draw the letters, and you shall work them.”

Miss Sable was so intent on availing herself of Helena’s powers of needlework, that she overlooked the unaccounted-for hours of the girl’s absence.

When Helena went to her bedroom she sat down and wept. The place where Turk had always slept was empty. Turk was lying in a lonely grave, and his mistress felt as if he must be conscious of the coldness and the loneliness, and the contrast between the hard stones of his cavern and the caressing hand of his young mistress. So she cried herself to sleep. Helena’s sorrows were heavy. Her small pleasures were snatched from her just as she was enjoying them.

On the following morning Helena was summoned to his lordship’s study ; but just as she

was about to be interrogated, the bailiff came to say that a settler from Australia had come to purchase some of Lord Santly's breed of merino sheep ; and in the bustle consequent on his introduction into the library, Helena escaped unnoticed, and her truancy was not thought of again.

"Do you like your nurse, mamma?" asked Helena, as a decent-looking woman got up and left the room as the girl entered.

But her mother only looked at her with a troubled expression.

"Do you not know me, dear mamma?" said Helena, alarmed.

But Claudine did not seem conscious that any answer was required of her.

Helena followed the nurse out of the room, pursuing her to that occupied by Mrs. Wallace. She stopped at the door ; neither of them saw her. The nurse was enjoying a luncheon of some porter and bread and cheese. Helena heard her say :

"She can't live long."

And as the girl turned away, sick at heart,

Mrs. Wallace observed that she meant to look sharp after her money.

"She has good linen and clothes," said the nurse. "They are my perquisites."

Helena had intended to ask how her mother had passed the night, but she could not speak to the woman then. Terror and disgust filled her mind.

She returned to her mother's room, and covered her thin hand with kisses. The familiar touch of Helena's caressing lips seemed to compel the wearied brain to continuous thought and recognition.

It was impossible to know if she were roused into fear of the attendant chosen as her nurse ; but she looked uneasy at the door, and then with her large eyes still fixed on the door, she took a small black silk chain from her neck, to which was attached a key ; then she pointed to a portmanteau which contained her clothes, and among them was a small jewel case. There were but two rings in it left of all her wealth, and these she placed silently on the finger of Helena, with the tip of her own pressed on her

lips in token of silence. Then she made a hurried sign that Helena should replace the box.

"Mamma!" she whispered, "are you afraid of that woman—shall she go away?"

But with piteous eyes, brimming with tears, she gave a puzzled look at her girl, unable, seemingly, to decide.

A haunting fear seized Helena lest the woman had become a terror to her sick mother, who was both bodily and mentally unfit to be in the hands of a cruel or careless nurse.

And, oh! misery! she could not stay with her; in a few hours she must go back to Lord Santly and his accounts. There would be the evening hours and those of the night, and her morning's lessons with mademoiselle to go through, before she saw her mamma again.

It was hard on a child scarcely fourteen to have to contend with such difficulties. Her mother's wishes were her laws. Her mother wished to conceal herself from Lord Santly and from Lady Gower. Of the reasons for this, Helena could not judge; the wish existed. It

was also her mother's great desire that Helena should continue under the care and protection of Lord Santly.

Here was another wish to be considered, and if possible obeyed. But not to leave her mamma at night to the care or carelessness of that strange woman, she was resolved.

"Mrs. Wallace," she said, "do not shut up the house early. I shall come back and spend the night with mamma."

"Lor', miss, no call to do that ; the nurse will see to her, and give her a drink of water or so if she calls for it ; and, seeing she is engaged, she'll expect to be paid all the same."

"Yes, certainly, she shall be paid," said the girl, wincing at the thought of the money ; "only, I shall come if I can."

The resolve that she would try made her more willing to depart. Her mother seemed unconscious that she was going, and Helena hoped she might doze, and not miss her much. She prepared some lemonade and barley-water, for Claudine ate but little, and had never drank fermented liquors.

CHAPTER XI.

"The nurse sleeps sweetly, hired to tend the sick,
Whom, snoring, she disturbs."

THE girl was punctual to her time in Lord Santly's library that afternoon, and worked hard at his books. Then she made herself useful to Miss Sable. It was a piteous silent supplication that neither of the task-masters would be hard on her if she were found out. Walk as fast as she could, it was out of her power to reach Oldchester under three-quarters of an hour after leaving the house.

She looked at the windows of the drawing-room, which opened down to the ground on to the flower-garden, and removed the bar gently after Albert had closed them for the night. That must be her mode of exit if she carried out her intention.

She worked busily at Miss Sable's initial

letter on the cambric handkerchiefs till her eyes ached. She was scared at the thought of the walk through the woods alone, and wiped her eyes as she thought of poor Turk. She had never cared for anything when Turk was with her. The twilight came on in gloom and shadow, and a few drops of rain fell from the sky, surcharged with vapour. She feared there would be no moon visible, and, oh! how dark the woods appeared seen from the window. She went to her room at ten o'clock, after a timid good-night to her governess. Then she waited till all sound had died away in the house.

Lord Santly went to his room, leaning on the arm of Albert, and Miss Sable was in her bed-chamber trying on a final arrangement of the hat and rose.

Then Helena tied on hers, but without looking at the effect in the glass. She would as soon have been without one, but that she might have attracted more attention bare-headed in the morning light, on her return.

The sky was lowering, and a drizzling rain was falling. Helena returned to her room, and

got her dark cloak and a pair of slippers. She might give her mamma cold if she remained at her side in wet clothes. Love gave her the wisdom of riper years in her care of her mother.

Now she must get safely out of the house. Her heart beat thickly as she descended the old oaken stairs, which were polished and uncarpeted. They were too large and massive—too majestic to creak, as ill-made modern stairs might have done. Some specimen fruits had been brought by the gardener to the library, and left there for Lord Santly's inspection. Helena's eyes had wandered to a purple cluster of grapes, with the soft bloom still on them, half hid in fresh leaves. Lord Santly half-impatiently pushed the whole basket towards her.

"There ! you will never end that page correctly whilst your mind is full of eating. Take them all—I could have eaten them, too, at your age, without dread of gout or indigestion."

"Oh, my lord ! I am so very grateful to you !" said the girl.

And Lord Santly meditated on the senselessness of girls.

"Here I give her food and clothes, and a governess, and no doubt she thinks me an old curmudgeon. I give her a basket of fruit, and she overwhelms me with her gratitude."

This basket she now embraced, for it had no handle by which she could place it on her arm. She unfastened the glass-door, and stood out in the darkness, terrified and half-inclined to go back.

Then, fearful of her own irresolution, she shut the glass-door noiselessly, and trod softly over the gravel. If any of the servants got up before her return she should be discovered, but the thought of her mamma's bewildered and perturbed face made her hasten on, defying the consequences. She felt pretty safe whilst on the gravel-walk. Then, looking up, she could distinguish the sky look lighter against the edges of the woods. They were dark enough, and through them Helena must find her way. She went on, rustling against the crossing branches, till she stopped for a moment to

listen, fancying she heard the sound of men's gruff voices. Girls have the instinctive dread of strange men that kittens have of strange dogs. She stood still, as helpless as a blind animal who, hearing the coming of some adverse footfalls, knows not whither to run to avoid their approach. Then she heard the loud growl of a dog, and felt a thrill lest Turk should be hurt, and remember with a sigh that nothing could hurt him ever again. She stood still, and presently, the voices coming nearer, she heard one say :

"There's something up here, or the old dog wouldn't give tongue."

"Whatever 'tis he'll pin him," said the other. The dog now sprung forward barking towards Helena.

She put her basket down behind some bushes, and seized a branch and raised herself into one of the trees. The animal, rushing on impetuously, passed the tree, and the men following him immediately, disturbed him from his pursuit.

"Thee'rt an old fool! to be sceart at an owl

in an ivy bush," said one of the men, addressing the baffled dog. "Come along, or we shall break the eggs."

And they passed, and Helena clung to her tree till they were out of hearing.

It was sad to thread her way through the dark wood, but it was sadder still to pass through the outskirts of Oldchester, and see unhappy women drawing their tattered clothes over their withered frames, and a troop of roystering men pouring out of a public-house. At length the girl reached the small house owned by Mrs. Wallace, and going up into the garden stealthily, she looked over the blind, to see into the room.

Her mother's head turned restlessly on the pillow, with glittering, wide-open eyes and flushed cheeks. The nurse was sleeping heavily with a comfortable, fat smile on her face; her feet on a footstool, and her back supported by an easy-chair.

"Water! water!" Lady Wynne murmured—"water!" but the nurse was untroubled by visions of neglected duties, and slept on.

Helena entered softly, throwing off her wet cloak and hat, and raising her mother's head, held the water to her parched lips. She felt the tender pressure of her child's arm, and cried :

“ Oh ! angel ! You are an angel to me.”

Helena's regular face, flowing hair, and refined expression, with a saddened look, might have made her a fitting model for a guiltless spirit,

“ Above all sin, but pitying all distress.”

The touch of her child's hand had brought the poor mother from the land of shadows produced by delirium, but now they gathered round her again.

“ Did you meet the funeral train ? ” she asked.

“ No, mamma.”

“ They are coming to fetch me. Don't let them take me, dear ! ”

“ Never, mamma ! ” said the girl, with a sob.

“ It is so hard to die so young, and whilst I have you to love me so.”

“Atheline! Atheline!” she cried, sitting up in the bed. “Hark! I heard his voice calling. Have you forgiven me, dear? Ah! you loved that cold-hearted woman!”

This was muttered as if she was confiding it to herself,

Probably no more painful position could be imagined than that of an innocent girl scarcely more than a child, compelled to hear the self-reproaches of a delirious and guilty mother.

Claudine said much which might have enlightened one less innocent. As it was, her bodily suffering occupied Helena’s attention to the exclusion of any mental disturbance. Towards five o’clock, when the rays of morning light shed something of hope and comfort on the sick-room, Helena stole out softly, without awaking the nurse, feeling that her mother’s rest would be more likely to be undisturbed while the hired attendant slept.

Then she took her hat and cloak, and put them on in the little garden, to make as little stir as possible in the sick-room. She left the

basket of fruit by her mother's side, and on a chair between the bed and the wall, for she thought that the nurse would not go on that side, and that when her mother turned that way she would see them.

Then she returned home through the wood—so fearful in the past night, so brilliant with its lance-like streams of sunshine on the shimmering wet leaves.

She thought of Turk as a hare crossed her path.

"I have no one to love me now Turk is dead but poor mamma."

She entered through the drawing-room, into which the maid had not yet penetrated, and closed the shutters carefully. Then she carried out an idea she had formed in her morning walk, and going out openly in sight of the servants, she proceeded to the greenhouse, where the gardener was selecting roses to place on the parterre.

"I wish," said Helena, pleadingly, "you would give me one for my own——"

"Certainly, miss," said the man, good-

naturedly ; "I will give it a fresh pot and a little more earth."

He did so, and Helena carried off her prize to the quarry, and placed the flower-pot at the entrance of Turk's cemetery, piling round it fragments of granite, and leaving it there—an emblem of love and of silence.

CHAPTER XII.

“Till nature, unavailing nature, foiled
So oft, and wearied in the vain attempt,
Scoffs at her own performance.”

HELENA continued her daily and nightly attendance on her mother, who was on some days cheerful and clearer in intelligence—on others her mind wandered, and then the girl’s distress was great. She found, too, that the great distances she walked and her deficient sleep made her irritable and drowsy. She never could be impatient to her sick mother, but sometimes she laid her head on the foot of the invalid’s bed, and dropped asleep. And then her mamma’s voice seemed to come to her from a far distance, whilst she felt unable to return to her or to answer. If she started up and held the glass of water to Claudine’s lips, five minutes after she was in dreams, rushing

after the flying form of Turk over the ferns, over the furze-bushes, over the tangled grasses into which she sank knee-deep.

Then when, at five o'clock, the patient's fever subsided, Helena lay down by her mother's side and slept soundly—overslept herself, in fact, and returned to Saints Ley just in time for Miss Sable's breakfast.

"You have taken an early walk, Mademoiselle Vernon?"

"Yes. It is very pleasant in the early dawn," Helena answered.

And no further observation took place.

Thus the days dragged on. Sometimes Helena felt a ray of hope, when her mamma talked cheerfully after the morning sleep, from which she awoke refreshed. But now another terror pressed on the poor girl. Her mother began asking if the answer had come to her letter.

"Of course the postman will not bring it. How should he know that Lady Wynne lived here? You must go to the post-office and get it."

So Helena went, and saw her mother raised on her arm, with her head turned anxiously to the door, to watch for her return.

"Well?" she cried.

"No letter, mamma," said Helena, shaking her head.

Then Claudine turned her face away, and Helena feared that she wept.

That afternoon, before the girl left, Mrs. Wallace came to the door of Claudine's bedroom, but Helena, with her finger on her lip, motioned to her to go back, and rose to join her outside.

"Mamma's asleep, Mrs. Wallace. Do you want anything?"

"Why, yes, miss," with an angry bob, meant for a curtsey. "There is put down on paper my little bill of what I have laid out, and what I have advanced. Also the second week's rent. And if it is convenient, I shall be glad to have it settled."

The bill was for various articles charged, which might or might not be correct, for they were for the nurse, and Helena could not say they were incorrect.

She took a ten-shilling piece from her pocket, and gave it to Mrs. Wallace.

"Take this on account," she said. "My mamma expects to have plenty of money in a day or two."

Mrs. Wallace took the bit of gold with a "humph!" so ungracious that Helena did not like to ask her to write it off the bill. She hoped she might be honest enough to do so.

What could she do if no money came? Foolish thoughts grew out of her perplexity. She would ask Lord Santly to give her some for a poor woman who wanted it very much. She would take the two rings, and ask the jeweller to buy them. No sooner thought than acted on, she ran to the shop and asked to see the master. He came out, and seemed very angry, and told her he must be sure where she got her jewellery before he advanced money on any more, for he was afraid from what he heard that the locket she had brought had been stolen. He refused to look at the rings, and said :

"Be off! and think yourself lucky if I don't send the policeman after you."

Pale and trembling from the insult, she made her way home to Lord Santly's—if that could be called a home, where not a single heart-throb was in unity with her own. Sometimes people may be essentially different, yet have some mutual point of sympathy. Miss Sable thought only of the charms of her person, and how to enhance them for the subjugation of man. At the age of fourteen, when girls generally begin to linger before the glass and tie their bonnet-strings with more attention to their appearance, Helena's natural vanities were starved out of her by her anxieties on account of her mother. She felt, as she walked up and down the woodland path, before she returned to the house, because she could not bear the acted tranquillity of her life within its walls. "If she asks me for the letter again, I must scream. It will drive me mad. Poor mamma! And that bill, how can I pay it, if the money don't come? It should have come the day before yesterday. What shall I do?—what can I do?"

Then she went and nailed her brain to Lord

Santly's accounts. She was suffering the tortures of Tantalus, for gold was on every side, yet she must not appropriate any to save her mother from starving.

She had taken off her rings, and hung them round her neck. She thought, "Shall I ask Lord Santly to buy them of me?" and then she laughed a bitter laugh at her folly in thinking Lord Santly could ever wear such delicate rings on his old knotted fingers.

The next day and the next there was no letter for Helena's mamma at the post-office. Helena went out every night through the wood, and became, from her utter misery, reckless about her time of returning. The servants began to look curiously at each other, though they said nothing to Miss Sable nor to my lord. She noticed nothing of this in her desperation. Towards the end of the week Claudine had sunk into a lethargy. She seemed only conscious of increased suffering when fever set in, and to be comparatively relieved when it subsided, when she slept tranquilly.

Mrs. Wallace again attacked Helena.

"Miss Vernon, if that is your name, unless the sick person has money to pay me and Mrs. Withers the sums she owes, she must be taken to the union. I ain't a-going to let her die here and me not be paid for my lodging."

"You could not have the heart—you never would do such a cruel thing," gasped the terrified child. "What! send my mamma, Lady Wynne, to the union?"

"As to her being a lady, I can't say. I'm told by them that have heard that she is a gay lady."

"How can poor mamma be gay, when she is so ill?" said the girl, utterly perplexed.

"Well! she can't be so now, certainly; and that's neither here nor there, but my money I must have to-morrow morning, or she shall be carried to the union to-morrow afternoon. Mrs. Withers stands by me—she wants her money too."

"Oh, Mrs. Wallace! Look at these beautiful rings? I will sell them and get money."

"Rings, indeed! I can buy as good anywhere for half-a-crown. They are mock! I'll have

my money, and your ma's clothes. Them belong to Mrs. Withers when your ma dies."

Half broken-hearted, Helena returned to the bedside of her mother, to see that her lemonade and barley-water were within her reach, and a mug of the coldest spring water Helena could obtain by pumping for some time before she filled the cup. She was fearful that they might neglect her mother on the strength of the unpaid bill, and she must leave her to the cruelty or neglect of those women.

CHAPTER XIII.

“Will you not aid me ? Ah ! you cannot guess
The bitter pangs my trembling lips conceal ;
A heart o’erburdened by its loneliness
Sinks under suffering it may not reveal.”

HELENA sat looking so piteously at Miss Sable in the evening, that she asked her what was the matter.

“I want some money very much,” Helena said.

“Do you ?” said mademoiselle, laughing. “I dare say you do. So do I. I have only half-a-crown. I hope Lord Santly will pay me soon ; my quarter will be up in a fortnight.”

During the afternoon the settler who had purchased the merino sheep had sent his payment for them in gold and some silver.

As Helena had sat at the desk as usual, Lord Santly had given her the money to count and

put into the secret drawer. He expected to realise on another sale soon, and on Helena's asking if it should be sent to the bank, he replied no. He meant to invest it after a few weeks himself. It would be safe enough there till then, he observed. "No one knows of the secret drawer but yourself, and you I can trust."

Helena's fingers lingered over the money.

"How happy you must be, sir, to have so much!" Then Helena longed to tell him that her mother was dying, and to entreat his help. But could she disobey that dying mother's injunction? No; she could not bear her look of reproach, even if she did not say a word.

"Oh, mother! mother! if I might but tell him!" she broke out suddenly in desperation. "Oh, sir! if you would but give me four pounds—I want it so much!"

"Four pounds! *You want four pounds!*"—lingering over each word.

Helena's face became crimson, and then paler than before.

"Yes, I want it."

"May I ask you for what purpose, young lady?"

Helena was silent.

"I give you food and clothes, and pay for a governess to teach you. You have no more claim on me than on the Pope of Rome. Your father was a profligate spendthrift—my second cousin twice removed; your mother was an abandoned woman of whom the less we say the better. And now you ask me to give you four pounds!"

"To *lend* it to me," said poor Helena.

"Lend it!" replied Lord Santly. "When do you expect to repay it?"

"I hope to do so in a day or so," murmured the girl.

"I tell you what it is, Miss Vernon, you are too fond of gadding about to Oldchester. I suspect you are following your mother's footsteps—got mixed up with some bad characters. I shall tell Miss Sable to keep a sharper look out. No whimpering."

Shame and anger had dried Helena's tears, so the last injunction was useless. Poor mamma

was right, she thought; she would have had neither aid nor pity from this stony-hearted man.

The words he had used, "It will be safe enough, for no one knows of the secret drawer but yourself, and you I can trust," had almost blunted her purpose, but the way in which he had spoken of her parents stifled every feeling of attachment or gratitude in her heart.

"My poor mamma will be carried to the union-house, and *he*—he has thousands that he gloats over, and need never use and need never miss."

CHAPTER XIV.

"Midnight theft to hatch,
To hang on tiptoe at the lifted latch."

SHE complained to mademoiselle of a headache, and said she was going to rest. She should not undress, but drew the counterpane over her to conceal her clothes. She fell asleep in this fashion, though she had not intended to do so, and did not awake till the clock struck two. Then she roused herself with a dreadful sense of trouble and consciousness that something was to be done to save her mamma from pain and disgrace. She longed to go to sleep again and forget it all. Youth requires so much sleep.

Lord Santly slept on the ground floor ; his bedroom opened into the library, where stood the bureau containing the secret drawer which

held his sovereigns. But on the other side slept his valet, and the door opened from his room into that of Lord Santly.

Helena did not believe that the valet ever locked his door ; but the library was locked, except from ingress by Lord Santly from his bedroom at night. By day, persons wanting to see him came from the outer room. It was the habit of the valet to turn the key in the library, first the outside and then the inside door, before he went to bed.

Helena stole down, feeling her way by the sides of the wall in the darkness. She dared not carry a light lest she should be seen. After the fashion of very old gentlemen of that period, the watch was attached to a massive gold chain with seals and watch-key. Helena knew that the watch was placed in a pocket attached to the head of the bed ; and that besides the watch-key there depended the key of the Bramah lock of the bureau.

Helena's intention—a sufficiently desperate one—was to take the watch from the watch-

pocket, open the door into the library, possess herself of four pounds, replace the watch, and return to her bedroom.

Her courage nearly failed ; but the thought of that dreadful Mrs. Wallace inspired her with fresh courage. "If mamma must die, her last moments shall not be disturbed," she vowed to herself.

Helena was an impressionable person, and the sultry day had terminated in a more sultry night. It seemed to her to be suffocating. As she stood hesitating, a low rumbling sound, preceded by a quick flash, showed her that the storm was come. She wondered whether God was angry with her for her intended theft. She could not help it. Mamma should be saved from outrage in her last moments, whether she were to suffer eternal punishment or not. Lord Santly rolled in wealth ; his sovereigns were his playthings. His white fingers and taper nails had never been polluted by doing anything harder physically than counting the contents of his money-bags, or mentally, than in calculating compound interest on the well-invested sums ;

and her mamma—her tender, beautiful mamma, had nothing, and she was dying. At this thought Helena twisted her fingers in her hair and hurt herself to divert her thoughts from the mental anguish. She had no intention of doing this; it is the natural impulse to do what it is called “tearing the hair.”

She must go on, however, now she had reached the door where the valet slept. It was latched, but not otherwise fastened. In that mighty mansion no dread was entertained of housebreakers.

Another point was in Helena's favour. Lord Santly had a sybaritish dislike to anything that grated on his nerves; consequently every hinge and every lock worked on the smoothest of oil and noiselessly.

Helena turned the handle very softly and stood within the room. The valet's curtains were drawn, and she did not know if he slept. Just then a vivid flash illuminated the room. It played on Helena's hair and on her white dress, so that her figure was seen like that of a spirit of light, dimly perceived through the ex-

tended curtain which, having no folds, gave a transparency.

The valet cried "O Lord!" and put his head under the clothes, whilst Helena moved slowly towards the opposite door. Before the library could be reached there were Lord Santly's bed-curtains to be displaced, and the key obtained from the watch. With determination born of despair she waited a moment after she had closed the door of the room between him and the valet, to listen if he slept. Yes; his breathing was gentle and continuous. He was deaf on one side, and deafness has its advantages sometimes, especially during thunderstorms in the night season. She passed her hand within the curtain over the dark green damask at the head of the bed on the side next to where she stood. The watch-pocket must be on the opposite side. She heard the ticking of the watch. A night-light burnt on the washing-stand, but the rays were very feeble. At length Helena's eyes became accustomed to the semi-darkness, and she detected the glitter of the gold chain depending from the pocket.

She stood with her face towards that of the sleeping peer, and in stretching out her arm her chest almost touched him. As it was, she impeded his breathing, and he began to stir uneasily, and to put out his arms. Helena snatched the watch, and sank down on her knees out of his reach.

The disturbing influence having been removed, Lord Santly slept again, and Helena squeezed the watch and chain tightly in her hand to prevent any click of the metal.

When all was silent she crept into the library, of which the door was partly open, left so by Lord Santly's orders, on account of the suffocating heat of the night. When she reached it, the dim light of the night-taper gave sufficient illumination to guide her to the bureau. She applied the key, but could not prevent a slight sound of the gold chain as it hit on the old oaken woodwork of the desk. The key was applied, the secret spring pressed, and the gold within her clutch. She dived her hand down and brought up five sovereigns—one more than she wanted. She dropped one back on the

heap ; then she took off the two rings her mother had given her—she believed that one was of at least eight times the value of the gold she had purloined ; but these, wrapped in a bit of silver paper, she dropped into the bag, in the place of what she had appropriated.

The thunder now burst in a terrific crash, so that this time the sleepers were aroused by it. Lord Santly, after his having been disturbed unconsciously by Helena's having interfered with his breathing, had turned on to his deaf side, consequently the ear which was most receptive of sound was uppermost, and the thunder-roll was, as the valet afterwards declared, " enough to waken the dead."

" James ! James ! "

" Yes, my lord."

" Where is my watch ? "

" At the head of the bed, in the watch-pocket, my lord."

" I can't feel it. It seems a fearful night."

Then it thundered again, and Helena, who believed she was detected, and was almost hopeless of concealment under cover of the " pother

o'er their heads," closed the bureau and laid the watch and keys on the table, near to the place where Lord Santly generally sat before his papers at his writing-desk.

"Get up and look for my watch, you stupid fellow!"

All this was shouted through the closed door. James had other terrors besides those of the thunder. He remembered that apparition of light of which he had discovered the gleam through his closed bed-curtains, and he had a terror lest something should seize him if he got out of bed. He felt safe from ghosts and from the storm which raged round the house whilst he was within his drawn curtains, but he knew from the tone of his master's voice that he could no longer be trifled with. So he got up; and being in his perturbation unable to find his box of matches, he went into his lordship's room and applied his candle to the night-light.

Any one who has attempted this delicate operation with a trembling hand, knows that the slender portion of wick which gives the

light breaks off at the slightest ill-usage, and leaves the clumsy performer in darkness. This was the result of James's efforts to light his candle, and the explosion of oaths from his master and the quick flashes of lightning, followed immediately by rocking peals of thunder, completed his dismay. "The devil will fetch away my lord, and I shall see it!" was his conviction. And here he was sitting in the middle of the floor with the night-light extinguished, and the unlit candle in his hand. After having cursed him for the stupidest lout that ever an unfortunate nobleman was cursed with, Lord Santly felt about on the stand next to his bed for the little silver case which held vestas; he struck one of these, and James joyfully brought the candle and re-lighted it.

"The watch is not here, seemingly. I must have left it on the table in the library, I suppose, when I sealed the letter for the post. Go and fetch it."

"Oh, my lord, what a dreadful night!" cried James, afraid of leaving the neighbourhood of

a living man, though, being a lord, he was not very companionable.

“What the devil are you afraid of, booby? Do you think the lightning will kill you in the next room sooner than in this?”

“I’ve heard, my lord, that metal attracts; and—and the key on your lordship’s watch-chain——”

“Go at once, and don’t make an ass of yourself.”

Helena had just got rid of the watch and chain from her hand when James entered the room; he carried the candle which revealed his pale frightened face as he made for the bureau and seized the watch. Had he dared to look round the room he would have seen Helena standing motionless, with dilated eyelids, white cheeks and lips, and open mouth, too much terrified to attempt to conceal herself. The rain drove against the panes of glass that rattled in the violence of the blast which roared and shrieked and moaned in the old chimneys.

James returned to the peer.

“It is half-past three o’clock, my lord. It

will soon be light now," and, in an undertone, "what a comfort that will be!"

Helena heard the words, but did not echo the sentiment. The daylight would reveal her presence in the library if she did not manage to get back to her room. The door was bolted on the inside. James was in the habit of unbolt-
ing it every morning to allow of the housemaids coming in to prepare the room. The bolt slipped back noiselessly, and the handle turned without difficulty. To bolt it again of course was impossible, and she must risk its being unfastened, and trust to James's believing, as Lord Santly did, in a lapse of memory. She waited about till the servants were up, and then said ostentatiously she was going out, and she should be back in time for mademoiselle's breakfast. Then she sped away over the park through the wet woods to Oldchester. The four purloined sovereigns were in her pocket, tightly fastened in her handkerchief. No remorse had seized her for the theft she had committed. She thought only that she should save her dear mamma from insult for another week.

CHAPTER XV.

“ As one who travelling through twilight gloom,
Yearning with haste to reach a dying friend,
Let's fear hold back his footsteps—lest the doom
Be spoken, that has bade all suffering end.”

As she got near the house she began to breathe more painfully, and to lag in her pace. If mamma should be—worse—she could not bear to say dead, but she thought it.

She hurried on then desperately, and, gaining the little garden, looked over the curtain. The nurse was asleep in her chair as usual, and she saw her mamma put up her handkerchief to wipe her eyes.

“ Oh, my poor mamma ! To be so ill and so sorry too ! ” said the girl, filled with intense love and pity.

She entered, and came like a bright angel to the bedside with her delicate blooming cheek and flowing hair.

"Oh, my child! my child!" said the poor mother. "You are such a comfort to me. But Helena, come close. Has any letter come?"

"I have not been to the post yet, mamma, this morning; but I've got money to pay those women now."

Claudine's lips moved to ask.

"The rings, you know, mamma," and her mother made a sign of assent, and seemed satisfied. She was weaker; and there was something unusual in her appearance, the girl thought.

"Go to the post, my dear," she faintly said; and Helena went. There were many waiting outside the window of the post-office.

"Any letter for Lady Wynne?" Helena said at length, when her turn came, and there was a smile in some faces, and a sneer more or less strongly marked in others; for nothing pleases the crowd more than an incongruity between a title and poverty and neglect. "A pretty lady she is — living with Widow Wallace!"

"She is his cast-off miss," said another ; "no lady at all !"

The postmaster sorted the letters under the head of W, and threw one towards the girl. It was come at last, then. She fingered it to try to judge if it contained a cheque, and thought of the bitter disappointment to her mother if she were refused what she had demanded.

She must carry it to her, however ; and she hurried along the streets to the outskirts of Oldchester, where the widow's cottage stood.

Her mother turned her face anxiously towards the door as she heard Helena's step. The girl held up the letter, too breathless to articulate. Poor Claudine took it from her daughter and tried to break it open, but her fingers were already numbed by approaching death. "Open," she said, faintly. And Helena, tearing it open, revealed a cheque for fifty pounds.

"Thank Heaven !" said her mother. "You will not be utterly penniless. A pen ;" and she scrawled her signature on the back. Then she turned her face away. Presently she spoke again. "Bank—cash it !"

"Yes, mamma, I know."

There was a long pause, in which the only sound was the hurried breathing of the invalid.

She turned her dying eyes on Helena. "In the churchyard with your papa."

"Yes, mamma."

Helena was too awe-stricken to weep.

"Lift me higher on the pillow," she said.

Helena tried, but she could not raise her mother, and called the nurse, whose strong arms did it effectually, whilst Helena shook up the pillow, and Claudine could breathe more freely.

"Thank you, nurse. We will call if we want you. I must be alone with my—girl," she said, feebly.

"Sing 'Forgive me, Lord, for Thy dear Son,'" she said; and her daughter sung the hymn in a faltering voice.

Then Claudine seemed to doze—for some time. Helena knew that the day was gliding on, and that she was a truant from made-moiselle and the French lessons. She rose, leaving the room softly, and put the four sovereigns

into the hands of Mrs. Wallace, who curtsayed and recovered all her obsequiousness at once. Then she returned to her mother's bedside. She seemed to sleep, but suddenly opened her eyes, and shut them again with a dreamy look, as she slowly relinquished her daughter's hand, and

"The pilgrim on her way was gone."

* * * * *

"Yes, miss, I'll see about the funeral. This day week, or perhaps on Saturday will be better. The nurse will expect the poor lady's clothes—that's her perquisite."

Helena did not know that the claim for the wardrobe was dishonest.

"I should like one of mamma's pocket handkerchiefs," she said.

"Well, yes, miss, I might ask her to give you one of them. I s'pose you would like to have the little red crown picked out, which the poor lady did not ought to have had seeing they say she wasn't married to the lord she lived with; and you see, miss, folks as are

partiklar will in course think less of you for being such an one's daughter. You see, my dear," she continued, "if I don't tell you these things other folks will, and a real lady would not have been a-dying all by herself with only a slip of a girl to look after her if she had been rightly married to Lord Wynne."

The poor girl was silent: she knew something of the facts here suspected—the accusation was true. There was a pause, then Mrs. Wallace went on.

"You would like a black frock and cloak and hat, miss—perhaps Lord Santly's people will get them?"

"No, Mrs. Wallace, please to order plain mourning. I have money enough to bury my mamma properly, if you will give the order. I wish it to be in Saint's Ley churchyard."

Here Helena broke down and sobbed, on which Mrs. Wallace assured her that "'twas nateral she should take on; but for the matter of that 'twas nateral, too, that parents should die before their children, and would be much worse if they did not; and I am sure," she

continued, "that you was a good gal, take it all round, to the poor lady that's gone, though to be sure she used to lie and cry for hours when you was junketting away at the great house, most likely; and as young people will be young people, and don't like to be shut up in such rooms——"

"I must go now," said Helena, seeing that she had only time to reach Lord Santly's library without keeping him waiting. "I shall come back to see mamma once more," said the girl, "before——"

"Yes, yes—afore she's screwed down—best come a Wednesday afternoon."

"Oh! mamma! mamma!" she cried, kissing her still warm cheek.

"Best go, miss—*nus* is a coming in, and you're in the way."

So Helena went, and called at the bank to present the cheque, and was told she should have the money in three days' time after they had been advised of it, which Helena did not understand, and wondered whose advice they wanted, and if she should ever get the money.

Then she bought some biscuits for her dinner. She should have overstayed all the meals excepting tea, and should not have anything to eat but what she purchased for herself. She asked the woman for a glass of water, who gave it in silent pity, for the girl's red eyelids were sad and disfigured by weeping.

CHAPTER XVI.

— If my secret sins
Have pulled this curse upon me, lend me tears
Enow to wash me white, that I may feel
A child-like innocence within my breast.

BRAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

WHEN Helena reached Saint's Ley she was met by Miss Sable.

"Well, Miss Vernon! your conduct is disgraceful! Luckily I did not wait breakfast—that would be folly. Nor dinner—that would be folly bigger. Lord Santly, he knows it not—I am too good-natured; but it me-seems you have made bad company—I would say bad acquaintance, and your bonnet—it is not honest—I would say not neat. Look! what you call bent—rumped."

"I had better go to my lord now, made-

moiselle. I hope to make up after tea for having behaved ill to-day."

"In truth, Miss Vernon, your visits do not seem to have been lively ones, judging from your face. You are *triste*—beat down, as we say in France."

Helena went to the library, and after curtsying to Lord Santly, she went at once to the books. There was a share-list lying on the library-table, as if he had been considering different investments, and the girl felt a chill at her heart, fearing that the theft might be discovered before she had time to replace the money.

He seemed to be displeased with her, but she knew that had her guilt been discovered it would not have been noticed only by a lowering brow.

The truth she suspected—and her suspicion was correct—was that she had begged money from him, and what she had done once, she might do again. On the following day she did not leave the grounds, and worked for mademoiselle with her needle and with her

head and pen for Lord Santly. It was true that falling tears had to be wiped away, but as no one cared for her grief, no notice was taken of it.

In the middle of the third day she went to the bank at Oldchester, to find if the partners had "been advised," as she thought it, to pay the cheque.

No difficulty was made, and fearful of losing so large a sum she returned home at once and sewed some of the sovereigns in her stays—not many—for she expected to have to pay away a large sum for the funeral; but first of all she must replace the gold she had stolen.

Lord Santly frequently fell asleep in the afternoon as she sat adding up his account books. Then the bureau stood open, and she might, she thought, press back the spring of the secret drawer and replace the money in the bag, taking out her mamma's rings, which, with a mixture of childish simplicity, as a salve to her conscience, she had there deposited.

But Lord Santly seemed, that afternoon, to be a demon of watchfulness. He held in one

hand a letter from his broker, and in the other the share-list, and pondered thereon. To undertake another night adventure she dared not. Her nerves had been too much shaken lately to attempt it.

The next day she went to see her mamma's dear face for the last time. She had written to Mrs. Wallace to say she was coming, and begged her to make a bill of all that would have to be expended in the funeral—for her mourning and for the lodging up to the last moment. She reminded her that she had already paid her four pounds ten shillings, which would have to be deducted from the sum total. Helena disliked the woman so much for her observations on her dead mother that she did not wish to enter her house again when the funeral was over.

When she went to Oldchester she walked without the spring of hope or the tremor of terror. She looked at the window of the room where her mamma was lying in her coffin. The shutters were closed, but the sash was open. She went into the death chamber with-

out observation from Mrs. Wallace, and saw the lines of light playing through the shutters on the tranquil face, and repeated the lines—

“Nor anger henceforward nor shame
Can redden that beautiful clay.”

The funeral was on the following day, and Helena asked Mrs. Wallace for the bill, and obtained it. It was larger than Helena had anticipated. Mrs. Wallace had told the undertaker 'twas useless to charge much for there wasn't much to pay with—a hearse was to convey the body and a mourning coach the single mourner.

“Better leave your new mourning now, and come half an hour sooner and put it on.”

“Is it deep enough?” asked the girl, observing a deficiency, as she thought, of crape.

“You will have a great cloak and black hood to put all over you as you stand at the grave, my dear.”

Then Helena returned home, intending to devote the rest of the day to Miss Sable and to

Lord Santly. Miss Sable's manner had been incomprehensible to Helena for the last few days. She was suffering pangs of jealousy because Doctor Abner had seen Helena by chance when crossing the park, and had asked mademoiselle who that very beautiful young lady might be. Helena was utterly unconscious of the admiration she had excited, not having seen the admirer.

"It is a thing very extraordinary that I tell to you, Miss Vernon," said mademoiselle, pouring out the tea and stopping to look fiercely at the girl, in the process of filling the dainty china teacups.

"Yes," said Helena, very tranquilly, helping herself to some dry toast and butter.

"You know Miss Vandeleur—the little pale girl at school?"

"Yes—Harriet Vandeleur—she had a locket, and she lost it?"

"Yes, Miss Vernon. She lost her locket just before you left Mrs. Delacy's establishment?"

"I remember," said Helena, with a confused

feeling of some evil message, but too bewildered to guess what was coming next.

"She lost her locket," repeated mademoiselle impressively, "and that locket I saw in a jeweller's shop yesterday, where a young lady had left it in pawn, receiving five sovereigns for what is worth seventy-five."

Helena turned very white, and set down the cup of tea which her shaking hand had lifted to her lips.

"Yes, Miss Vernon, she lost the locket, with H. V. on it—Harriet Vandeleur—in brilliants; beauties! And how did that locket come into Mr. Levis' shop? I should like to know that. I cannot overlook this circumstance, Miss Vernon. I must tell Lord Santly."

"Oh, mademoiselle! pray do not tell him! I could explain it all. I did not steal that locket."

"Miss Vernon, I must tell my lord."

"Then wait till this time to-morrow. I shall have finished the last corner of the embroidery in your half-dozen handkerchiefs then. I have never wronged you, mademoiselle."

"I have kept *my* property locked," said the Frenchwoman, sneeringly. But I am merciful ; I will wait till this time to-morrow."

When Helena left Miss Sable, she was resolved to find some opportunity of replacing the sovereigns that evening. The idea of the accusation of theft arising from the incident of the locket was sufficiently embarrassing ; but to meet that was a future care. She must clear herself from the real crime before she was accused on an imaginary one.

CHAPTER XVII.

“ Canst thou forgive who never hast been tempted,
Nor ever known a wish ungratified ;
From sordid suffering by wealth exempted,
Circling in self, and all self-satisfied ? ”

HELENA looked so white when she entered Lord Santly's library, that, self-occupied as he was generally, he continued to observe her after he had lifted his head from the newspaper which had occupied him before she had come.

She took her usual seat, however, after she had curtsied in silence to her patron, and only showed nervousness by a slight trembling of her fingers when she tried to tie a piece of red tape round a bundle of receipts.

It was a drowsy afternoon ; close and breezeless. Lord Santly was reading the money market and city intelligence before his open bureau. A gnat came singing into the room.

Lord Santly had a particular dread of gnats. The bites of these creatures frequently gave him attacks of erysipelas. He tried to beat down his enemy with the newspaper, and thought he had succeeded, for he neither heard nor saw it again. Presently he sank back further in his chair, his chin fell on the voluminous folds of his blue silk necktie, the white hands relaxed their hold of the *Gazette*, and his eyes closed in sleep.

Helena looked up with staring eyes and open mouth. The chair in which the old man was sleeping was inconveniently in her way, and she must lean over him to reach the secret drawer. But it was no longer feasible to delay. She must risk something. She half rose from her chair, and sat down trembling so violently that her teeth chattered. She told herself that her terrors were vain. He would not awake. She rose and, leaning forward, pressed the spring ; it sprung open with a click. She heard dimly the gnat singing round the smooth pale head of the sleeping man. Her hand was in the recess, and she pulled out the bag from whence she

had purloined the gold and deposited the rings. She put back the sovereigns, and then dipped in her hand to find the rings. She felt them, but they slipped away lower. She was compelled to displace a quantity of the gold. Then holding the bag in one hand and searching vainly for her rings with the other, and bringing several pieces to the surface, not daring to turn out the whole contents lest a chink should be heard, but with her guilty hand filled with coins, she stood. Suddenly there was a grasp on her arms, and Helena felt as if she must die—indeed, to die she felt would be the happiest thing that could happen to her.

There was a look of sarcasm and contempt on Lord Santly's face as he dropped her arms and sank back in his chair.

"So! How much had you taken?"

"None!" gasped the girl.

"None yet. How very sad that I should have interrupted you! But I cannot answer for what you may have purloined. I know the exact sum there should be. Be so good as to count out the contents of that bag—or, stay, I

will not give you that trouble." And he rose and carried the bag to a pair of scales, and found the weight rather heavier than that which was correct. Then he made Helena bring all the bags, lest she should have tampered with any of the others.

"That will do. Now, Miss Vernon, we will have a little conversation together. You have managed to get into a bad set—of thieves, probably. I have found men always cheat me, as a rule ; but I thought that a girl, scarcely grown to womanhood, on whom I had bestowed nothing but kindness, would scarcely at so early an age have developed such vice and such ingratitude. I cannot make up my mind at once what must be done for you. There are reformatories in London, into one of which I could get you admission. I am grieved that such a disgrace should have fallen upon your father's child—an extravagant dog, but an honourable gentleman. He would have blown his brains out had he known what his daughter had become. You are aware that you cannot be kept longer in my house. Go to your room,

and to-morrow I shall see what is best to be done with you."

Helena heard all in silence. When Lord Santly ceased to speak, she attempted to utter some reply, but her voice was hoarse and her words inarticulate. She judged herself more harshly even than he had judged her, for her poor mamma had become insensible of pain and insult, and the fearful temptation which made her steal the gold to allow her mother to expire in peace, did not seem in retrospection what it had appeared at the moment.

"Her soul, no more by passion wrung,
More justly judged the wrong she'd done."

And the crime of which she had been guilty in carrying out her wishes with regard to her mamma was crying aloud in her heart, and confronting her eyes in crimson letters. She turned to leave the room at his command, but returned and knelt down at a little distance.

"I beg you to forgive me, sir!" she sobbed out. "You can never know the circumstances. I was in such distress. You have been so

good. You were so kind, and gave me delicious grapes, and they were all that she could eat."

"What the devil are you talking about?" cried the peer.

"Only, sir, that I beg you will try to forgive me as much as you can, and that book is all rightly added—and, good-bye, sir!"

She went out without waiting for an answer. She scarcely could see the marble pavement of the hall which she crossed to reach the staircase which led to her room. Then she flung herself on her bed and cried herself to sleep.

"Confound it! that infernal gnat stung me after all!" said the peer, hunting about amongst his papers for his bottle of sal-volatile.

Helena slept but little, waking up with a confused sense of trouble on her mind at the first faint gleam of light which penetrated the curtains of the open windows. She remembered that this must be her home no longer. She looked round the old wainscoted walls with an affection which one gives to objects seen for the last time. There were a few framed pic-

tures hung up seemingly because the possessor had not known how else to get rid of them ; several bunches of roses, carnations, and picotees, worked on white satin, by some industrious ancestress, now faded into a soft yellow, the silk threads having been guided into sharp points to represent the thorn of the rose branch and the serrated edges of the picotees. There was a fine line-engraving of Hagar and Ishmael dismissed to perish in the desert. Helena pitied Ishmael. Hagar to her was dead and could suffer no longer.

“If I had but Turk left,” the girl thought.
“If I had but one creature not against me.”

Helena knew by past experience that to be weak was to be trodden upon ; now she found that to be weak was to be wicked.

She put back the curtain and looked out on the ghostly landscape shrouded in white mist, which had not yet begun to glisten in the upward rays of the risen sun. She would dress, and speed along through the silent woods before she could be stopped. She would hide up in the green recesses till it was time to

attend her poor mamma's funeral, and then she would take a third-class ticket at the railway and go to London. She thought of London as of a great crowd in which to hide herself. It would be difficult to find her there, she hoped. She wanted to fly from Lord Santly's well-intentioned cruelties—a reformatory! She was to be herded with vile women to make her good. She felt flushed with indignation when she thought of it. She would leave the house before even any of the servants were up. When her poor mamma was safely laid in the earth she would go away—anywhere—so that she might not be caught and sent to a reformatory.

She put together her few treasures. The beautiful locket she had money enough to reclaim, and would have done so, but after what mademoiselle had said, she was afraid of being taken up for the theft; but she had small articles on which she depended—thimble, scissors, needles, reels of sewing cotton. These were placed in a small leather bag with some linen and a few toilette necessities. Helena

had never possessed much property. The bag was, though small, but half filled, and was very light.

“It will last me as long as I live, and that will not be very long,” thought the girl; for young folks oftener contemplate death than do their elders. When Nature promises that inevitable fear to be far off, it is more tranquilly anticipated than when it is known to be nigh, even at the doors.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“ No one likes justice brought home to them.”—*Italian Proverb.*

“ MRS. WALLACE,” said nurse, coming in after a slight tap at the door, on the morning of the funeral, “ what’s the reason that the p’leceman have been a-hovering round your house all the morning ? I seed ’im from my winder as I was a-putting on my cap, which hung—yes, it did—on the side of the looking-glass ; for that’s the only place where I can keep it, seeing ’tis in common wear.”

“ Lor’ ! ” said Mrs. Wallace : “ you don’t say so ! And I not to know it—as innercent as a babe. I’ve never done nothing to be took up for ! ”

“ Perhaps,” said the nurse, with a look of awe, “ there’s something by she that is gone.”

“ Mercy, woman ! why they never could go

and take up a corpse for committing a murder or a robbery, could they ? ”

“ The Lord only knows,” replied the nurse. “ They take up a corpse that don’t pay its bills, poor body ! so why not if they have commit murder or robbery ? But, Mrs. Wallace, if your conscience is clear, you won’t let the p’leceman go roaming about round and round your house, disgracing a respectable widow woman like that ; but you will go out and ask him in to have a drop of tea with you ; for you may as well make for two as for one, or for three as for two, for that matter. I know there was a’most a quarter-pound of that poor lady’s tea left, so it won’t be much out of your pocket.”

Mrs. Wallace said “ Humph ! ” for so long as the tea was undrank it was so much *in* her pocket, and she did not admire the way in which the nurse had invited herself to breakfast.

“ Nurse,” said she, “ ’tis easy talking, but you don’t know what a deal it will take out of my cupboard to feed a great hungry feller like that.”

"Don't you go for to put it off with that, mum," said nurse, with a sniff. "I believe, as sure as I'm alive, that you're afraid."

"Afraid! no one can say that black's the white of my eye, Mrs. ——," retorted Mrs. Wallace, with a confused and terrified memory of all the various little cheateries of her life and a wonder if it could have brought her within the cognisance of the law. "'Twould be well if everyone was as innercent as I am. I am sure if poor dead corpses could speak, they would tell tales on some folks would stop their lying still in their beds a-nights. But no one shall say that I was afraid of a p'leceman." So, with an angry swerl, she pulled on her bonnet and switched her shawl over her shoulders with a sweep which flapped the fringe of one corner into the nurse's eye, and went forth with an attempt at dignity which was a failure from her ill-disguised nervousness.

"Mr. P'leceman," she said, going up to him, whilst his eyes were scanning the furthest point of the highway from which the cross could be seen to diverge; "may I ask, sir, if you are

a-looking for anyone, and if not, what you may be a-doing round my house so frequent, which is a respectable house as no p'leceman have ever come into except in civility all the time *I've* had it. All the same, sir, I've no objection to p'lecemen ; and if you would like a cup of tea this morning, and a piece of bread and a bit of good Dorset butter there, 'twill be on the table in ten minutes from this time. So, say the word."

"The word's soon said, mum. Yes ; I'll come."

Mrs. Wallace was so struck by the manly presence and good looks of the policeman, that she resolved to put down a rasher of bacon on the gridiron for his benefit, but a glimpse of nurse's petticoats as she returned to the house, those petticoats not being in movement, but smoothed down in quiet folds from the knees of their wearer, determined her against that act of hospitality, of which the nurse must have had her share of the benefit.

So she went in, and sought out a clean cloth for the table, and in both ungracious and angry

clatter of the teacups, arranged three on it,—the nurse looking on all the while with a hungry aspect,—when a boy put his head in at the door and cried :

“Nus ! Nus !”

“Why, Lor’ !” said Mrs. Wallace, “if ’t isn’t Jack ! How you have growed, to be sure !”

She was complacent towards Jack, for she felt sure, from “the way on ’um,” as she declared afterwards, that he was going to do her a good turn.

“Oh, boy ! what is it ?” groaned the nurse, seeing her prospect of a good breakfast and a comfortable coze with the policeman vanishing away.

“It’s Mrs. Simmons, and I was to take you back with me, dead or alive,” said Jack.

“Well, boy, what must be, must be ; but you might let me have a bit of bread and cup of tea first.”

“All right, mum ; I’ll go and tell Mrs. Simmons you’re engaged with a p’leceman.”

“Drat the boy’s imperence ! You wait here till I get my little box. You may as well carry

it, for it is not very heavy. It looks better, young man."

Jack agreed, and nurse disappeared into her own house to arrange for her absence, and pack her box, which, as she had said, was by no means heavy on this occasion, but would much increase in weight before it returned to its proper home.

Jack sat down outside the wall, and played with a sleeping kitten, who, not approving of the company of Jack, retired to the back of the house, where there was an apple-tree, her favourite resort in danger. The adventurous Jack followed her, but was arrested by the sound of Mrs. Wallace's voice, welcoming the policeman, on which he abandoned the chase of pussy, and sinking down on a bed of marigolds, which grew under the window, he prepared to listen to what promised more amusement.

At first he was not much repaid for his attention. There was only a cordial greeting on the part of Mrs. Wallace, and then a pause, and then a hissing of fat was heard, and a

savory smell of fried bacon came through the window.

Afterwards, when the rage of hunger was assuaged, Jack heard broken bits of conversation, of which he contrived to make out the general tenor.

Mrs. Wallace was inquiring whether he was "a-spying on any partiklar party" that morning, near her house. Then, in a lower and more confidential tone, he admitted that such was the case.

"There was an ugly story," he said, "about a young lady and a locket, which she was said to have become possessed of unlawfully, and he was to take her up before the magistrate, who would probably commit her to jail."

"What! not Miss Vernon?"

"Helena Vernon is the name, ma'am."

"Oh! good gracious alive! Well, I'd never believe it of her—a sharp young lady about her poor ma, but quite a lady about money—paid up well. Them folks don't go for to steal."

"'Rob Peter to pay Paul,' may be," said the

policeman ; “ but whether she’s innocent or not ’tis for the gentlemen at the bench to say, but I must take her before the magistrates.”

“ You wouldn’t go and stop her going to the funeral of her poor ma, that will be put into the hearse presently—all done so handsome, and miss in a mourning coach. Such a credit to my house—such a disgrace if you do such a cruel, cruel thing! Enough to bring the poor lady to life again ! ”

“ Mrs. Wallace,” said the policeman, “ don’t you be afraid. I always do the business genteel when I have ladies to tackle. I wanted to have a good look at the young lady under the sly, and I thought she would be sleeping here, or be here early for the funeral. Then I should know her looks, and be able to take her away quiet, when the folks had disappeared.”

“ Jack ! Jack ! where is that dratted boy ! Jack ! ”

Jack appeared briskly at the nurse’s call.

“ I was taking a nap in the sun, marm,” said he, “ till you wanted me.”

Jack having had the promise of a shilling from Mrs. Simmons if he brought back the nurse, shouldered the little box and trudged after her with alacrity.

CHAPTER XIX.

“ And none will seek the silent shade
To ask where thou art lowly laid,
For none remember thee
Weeping bitterly— but me.”

IN the morning hours, Helena having more time than she required, paid a visit to the quarry to say farewell to poor Turk's grave. It gave her a slight feeling of pleasure to see the red rose blooming kindly under the warm shelter of the stones. She turned aside with the pot to dip it in the edge of the stream, that it might be thoroughly soaked with moisture, the last mark of care she could ever bestow on it. Then she carried it back to the entrance of Turk's cemetery and left it really wasting its sweetness. She looked back on it with satisfaction. It made such a beautiful bit of solitary colour in the waste.

“ Good-bye, poor rose! good-bye, my

darling Turk! I shall never come back any more."

Her bonnet, cloak, and frock were very old and shabby. The new mourning was at Mrs. Wallace's—she would leave the old suit there, and allow Mrs. Wallace to think she was coming back; but they would not be worth taking. Her little bag was heavy enough already. She hid this bag under some bushes in a brake through which there was a short cut to the railway. When she left the church, this would be the nearest point she would reach before arriving at the terminus.

From the situation of the sun she supposed it was now time to go to Mrs. Wallace's cottage, and put on her mourning for the funeral. As she drew near the house Jack jumped down from the hedge, where he had been perched in a tree, and joined her.

"So your ma's dead, and you're going to the berrying?"

"Yes," said Helena, with a trembling lip.

"I told you she was a-going, when we walked

together into Oldchester. *I* knowed. Bless you ! folks can't deceive me."

There was a silence, and then Helena said : " She liked you, Jack : she often missed you after she went to Mrs. Wallace's, she told me," and the girl sobbed, thinking that her mother should have " missed " so slight a thing as Jack's service.

" She was a nice lady, she was. She was a mother to me. I never had such a lot of six-pences in my whole life as what she gave me."

They walked on together in silence, the girl not liking the companionship.

" We're near about of a height," he said, looking at her steadfastly. " I seed Miss Botterel a-going up to old Wallace's house with your mourning duds this morning. I guess you're going to take off these and put on them ? "

" Yes, I am," said Helena, " shortly."

" Well—I've got a sister they would just do for if you'll give them to me."

" You are very welcome, I'm sure," said Helena ; " they are not worth much to anybody,

but I would rather your sister had them than Mrs. Wallace or the nurse."

"All right—you leave them there. Now, you listen to me. If I come and speak low to you in the crowd at the grave, don't you go for to jump or to cry 'Oh!' like a fool, but keep quiet and follow me. You've got a big handkerchief to cry in, haven't you? Cause you must give me a whopper."

"Oh, dear! I don't know what you are talking about."

"You'll know soon enough, and you will be thankful to me then."

"If you come to the cottage at once I'll give you the clothes tied up in a bundle out of the window that looks into the garden; said the girl." And going into the house she stripped off the promised clothes, and tying them up, flung them, together with the hat and veil, into the garden, where they were caught by the expectant hands of Jack.

She went and sat by the coffin when she had put on her new black clothes, and laid her head against the woodwork. "I am glad poor

mamma can never suffer again," she thought. "I wish I were with her, for I am a wicked girl and nobody loves me,"

The men came and carried the coffin to the hearse.

"Look sharp!" cried the undertaker—we must be punctual, for Squire Freemantle's funeral is to come off after this poor lady's. That is a very grand one—such fittings—eight mourning coaches—fourteen private carriages."

"A deal of money he have left they say," said Mrs. Wallace."

"Three hundred thousand pounds!"

"Ah! no wonder there's a fuss over burying him," said Mrs. Wallace.

"Arn't you a-going, marm, to your lodger's funeral?"

"No, I ain't; I've got the house to get ready for another that's coming in this afternoon."

"It seems lonesome for the poor young lady," said the man, "to be the only mourner."

"She'll have to put up with it, then," and Mrs. Wallace walked back into the house, while

Helena was put by the man into the mourning coach, which proceeded to the churchyard.

The clergyman advanced from the porch to meet the coffin, repeating the sentence—"I am the resurrection and the life!" The single mourner followed it. There was a small assemblage of people gathering round the grave, and pressing forward to look down into the depth. Outside the large gate lurked the policeman, ready to seize on Helena as soon as she was beyond the sacred precincts. But this funeral was merely the prologue to the play in the opinion of the spectators. The mighty pageant of Alderman Freemantle's last ceremonies was the attraction to the crowd, which was momentarily increasing.

Helena was too wretched to weep—too perplexed to show any outward signs of sorrow. Even at the solemn sound of "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," which usually rends the hearts of those who stand weeping at the mouth of the pit, she was glad her mamma was safe from further troubles. Even at that awful moment she heard the whispered

observations of two old crones standing behind her.

"They've laid her close to Sir Atheline."

"Yes—cummer—they a'."

"She went away with another man—'tain't fair to the poor dead gentleman to put her there and he not able to raise his hand agin it."

A pitiful moan proceeded from Helena's young lips. How could she bear this shame! She who was wicked, too, for was she not a thief?"

The service was over—the clergyman returned to the porch to issue from it again, for the funeral train of Alderman Freemantle was now approaching. She stood by the uncovered grave—the sexton was gone to the one prepared for the wealthier client, to go through the same office. Noiselessly and slowly a figure approached her. She thought not of anything, but the coffin sunk down into the damp pit, when a voice said in a whisper, "Walk slowly after me behind the church, as if you were a-going out at the great gate, and look at the tombstones as you go, as if you was taking

one for a pattern of what you would put up for yourself. Stop inside the corner where you see me stop."

Helena knew Jack's voice. She believed that he wanted to save her from some danger unknown to her. She knew he was the only friend she had in the world, and she sauntered after him, looking at the inscriptions on the tombstones as she passed on. Jack seemed to be her double, being dressed in her clothes. Now she saw how kindly he had meant by her, when she had believed him to be simply grasping. Arriving at the corner of the church she saw him with his freckled face made expressive by anxiety.

"Give me the hood and mourning cloak—quick!—go slow at first, but run for your life after you are out of that little gate, to the railway—off to London, you'll catch next train—don't take a cab from the station in London—walk away now, slow at first, and then run for your life."

The little gateway was pretty well hidden behind the church; Helena stole down slowly

towards it, and Jack, enveloped in the hood and cloak of chief mourner, more slowly followed the procession towards the grave of Alderman Freemantle.

The policeman had his attention fixed on the black figure which stood in seemingly profound reverence at the grave of the rich man.

“She wants to see the finish of that too! One would think she did not fancy the business she’ll have when ’tis all over. I wonder if the widder and children will take on much. I should like to see them go off myself, so miss may take her time with the rest.”

The clergyman read slowly and impressively. He was of opinion that the superior quality of the rich silk scarf, hatband, and gloves that awaited him in the vestry deserved this mark of attention on his part. At the conclusion of the service, the widow, who was a Wesleyan in her heart, begged the clergyman to be allowed to sing a hymn. Certainly. He could have no objection now that *his* part of the service was concluded. This was not quite what the widow wanted, who would have preferred that he

should give out the hymn two lines at a time. However, one of the mourners took the book, and the psalm was duly sung. Jack sang too, with almost too much power and emotion considering his supposed recent loss.

In his heart he was rejoicing in the repetition of the two last lines, which lengthened out the time very considerably.

“She won’t be safe for an hour and a half,” he went on repeating to himself. “If they find she is gone—and they’ll ask there the first thing—they will telegraph and have her stopped at the terminus when she gets out. Poor gal! if she did prig the locket, p’raps she wanted it.”

CHAPTER XX.

“ Hie away, hie away,
Over bank, over brae,
Where the meadow grass is longest,
Where the water flags are strongest,
Hie away, hie away !”

“ THEY won’t be more than an hour at this fun,” he said to himself ; “ then I must lead Bobby a dance for another half hour.”

Jack sang and thought in rhythm, and a prolonged and resounding Amen warned him to look out for the policeman. He was pretty sure not to attempt to arrest the girl in the presence of the mourners. The getting off the funeral procession occupied fifteen minutes. Jack could see through the hood, and above the white handkerchief which he had taken from Helena when they changed clothes, that Bobby had his eye on him.

As the hearse and carriages drew off, and the

crowd dispersed, Jack's attention to the tombstones near the little gate redoubled. He was the only person now in the churchyard, and the policeman was getting tired; for though the ample breakfast given him by Mrs. Wallace had materially added to his stock of patience, he was beginning to crave for more food. Consequently he came across the churchyard in the direction of the muffled figure of Jack, who stood with his back towards him, resolutely surveying a list of virtues possessed by the sleeper beneath, as never yet has been practised by any mortal creature.

"If it takes all that to get to heaven," said Jack to himself, "a poor chap like me has never a chance, so I must go to the other place, I s'pose."

He began to walk now briskly towards the gate—some one in going through had passed the loop of a rope attached to it over the doorpost. "Drat it! he'll catch me just as I'm fumbling to undo it," said Jack, as he heard the footsteps which pursued him coming nearer at an increased pace.

He sprung forward at a speed utterly indecorous, and reached the gate as the policeman stretched out his arm to reach him, exclaiming, "Miss Helena Vernon, I wish to have a word with you—stop a moment, I shan't hurt you, miss." Thus saying he seized the mourner's cloak.

To his amazement the supposed young lady wriggled herself out of the black folds, and flung herself over the little wicket-gate, and took to her heels down the declivity which led to the church meadows. So extraordinary was the speed of the fugitive, and so wonderful the appearance of the hood which still remained on Jack's head, that the policeman, chosen rather for his strength of limb than for acuteness of intellect or swiftness, stood staring at the lessening figure, without considering that he ought to follow it.

Then he started off and felt that he was gaining on his destined victim. He knew the locality, and suspected that Miss Helena intended to take a circuitous route to the great house, where no doubt she expected shelter, if not sanctuary.

On sped the figure in the black frock, but the worthy man was shocked at the breach of propriety in a girl so young and so modest-looking as she had seemed when he saw her enter the house in the same dress she was now wearing. She had lifted her petticoats in a way that disclosed a large proportion of legs, whilst it allowed them fair play, which the floating draperies impeded. "I shall soon have my young lady, now," he thought complacently. "She is making for the river—she does not know there is no bridge."

But Jack knew it perfectly well. The flooding of the river which washed away the planks had left the stumps which had supported them. These stumps, over which the water rippled, making little eddies on each side of them, had had great attractions for Jack. It was his delight to spring from one to another on his pointed toe. Any hesitation between one support and another was certain immersion in the water, which was both broad and deep at that place. When he reached the margin and heard the policeman panting after the fugitive

Daphne, Jack pulled his clothes even higher, and flung himself forward, resting on every block with such certain poise, that he reached the opposite bank with only wetting the toes of his shoes. The feat looked so easy that the policeman did not hesitate to follow. "What her legs can do mine can beat," he thought, and assayed the adventure with right good courage. At first, when he reached the middle of the stream, the water running over the blocks where he must set his foot, made his eyes dazzled and his head giddy. It was equally dangerous to go on or to go back ; he made another attempt, and fell with his face and head into the stream ; as he rose to the surface he heard peals of elfish laughter.

Jack, with Helena's bonnet in his hand, was swinging it round and shouting, "Hourah ! hourah ! the Bobby is beat !"

"He thought himself clever, he thought himself neat,
And he ran out of breath, and was all in a heat ;
So he jumped in the water to cool his poor feet,
For oh ! and for oh ! the poor Bobby was beat."

The policeman, puffing, with his head above

the water, which ran down from his hair into his eyes and mouth, felt forced to swallow a gulp in his effort to vociferate.

"Was it good, Bobby?" said Jack, in a tone of intense interest. "Good as the cup of tea you had this morning? Oh! my! didn't the vidder drop the sugar in wonderful!"

"You d——d scoundrel! I'll give it you as soon as I catch you!" said the policeman, raising himself on one of the submerged posts.

"All right, Bobby—so you shall when that happens. Hark! there's Oldchester cathedral clock striking two!—we've done a deal of business since the morning. Good-bye, Bobby, I must return to the shop—had a half holiday this morning to see the fun—funeral I should say—shop shut—great man, Alderman Freemantle!"

He turned to go away, but a sad sound came on the breeze. "Jack! Jack! I can't get out of this cursed bog, my boots are so heavy."

"Very good. Yes! Bobby; but what then?"

"Can't you pull me out, just a little?" he added, in a coaxing voice.

"Don't you know what you threatened just five minutes ago?" said Jack, grinning.

"Ah! boy! I was angry naturally then."

"Water has cooled yer a bit, eh!"

The policeman gnashed his teeth.

"There's a good boy, 'twill be murder if I get drowned."

"Why I didn't ax yer to go in there," said the boy.

"'Twas in the discharge of my duty," said the policeman, trying to assume a tone of dignity.

"Then your duty may help yer out," said the boy, going up the path.

"Jack, Jack, I can't hold on much longer—the mud is sucking me in."

"Ah, Bobby, I know there is a great hole thereabouts where things are drawed under."

"Jack! I'll give you a shilling if you'll get me out."

"That's more than I can manage, Master Bobby, and you'd flog me within an inch of my life, you know you would; but if you'll give me a shilling when I see you again, I'll go and get

Bill Waters up at the cottage there, and he will pull you out with his wife's linen line."

Jack ran and returned in a few minutes.

"He's a-coming as soon as he's untwisted the rope from the posts. I saw the old woman's flannin petticoat go flop on the ground, as one piece went loose. There! he's coming now—you can see 'um. But, Bobby, there's be songs all over Oldchester about the half drowned policeman—

' Did you ere hear the like
Of the story I tell,
Of Bobby the handsome,
Of Bobby the swell ;
He did all his duties uncommonly well,
But one fine summer's day in the river he fell,
And we call him

The half drowned policeman.

Now make it half-a-crown, my good feller, and mum's the word—nobody shall hear of it in Oldchester—honour bright!"

The policeman groaned, but thought he had better buy Jack's secrecy by an additional eighteenpence to the shilling he had already promised ; so he declared on the honour of a gentleman he would give Jack the half-crown

as soon as he got out, which he did, with a shilling to the man, so that he lost in money three and sixpence, besides spoilt clothes and the chance of a cold.

“Better run back again as fast as you can, to make you warm,” said Jack, with a parting grin; “yer run well, nobody can deny, but yer don’t look afore yer leap—think of that, Bobby, when yer along o’ that vidder,” and he strolled up the meadow, looking back occasionally, and rattling the half-crown in his pocket against a halfpenny and a farthing.

CHAPTER XXI.

"Come rest in my bosom, my own stricken deer,
Though the herd have all left thee, thy home still is here."

IN the meantime Helena, scared and trembling, ran along the fields which led to the railway station. Her thoughts were so much occupied by the desire of escape, that it was not till some familiar objects she was passing arrested her attention, that she remembered the little black bag containing all her small personalities. She diverged—grasped the handle and ran on not much encumbered by the additional weight; she looked fearfully back, but no one was following her. A groan, a whistle, and a great puff of smoke against the blue sky announced that the train had just reached the station by which she was to escape,

and she hastened on, and reaching the office, took a second-class ticket to London. The guard opened the door of a second-class carriage, but it contained some disreputable-looking men only, and the appearance of Helena, so delicate and refined, made the man shut the door again in a hurry. The train was about to start. The next carriage was an empty one, first class. He opened the door and put Helena in. "Say nothing," he said, "or say 'twas a mistake of the guard, William by name, when the ticket porter comes—he'll know."


Helena certainly did not, and was not aware that she should have given the man a shilling. He stood looking at her, however, like a dog watching for a bone, so that she suspected the truth, and redeemed her character by the expected gift.

She was glad to be alone, to stare out at the quickly vanishing landscape, with no witness of her utter bewilderment and despair. What should she do? what *could* she do? She asked herself so often, that all meaning seemed to detach itself from the words.

“Not a friend in the world,” was the sound which the rumble of the carriages seemed to say. “Not a friend in the world.”

Then came another dread. She had forgotten poor Jack, whose care for her had arisen from her poor mamma’s sixpences : but now she remembered his warning. What could it mean ?

At length it flashed upon her. If the policeman failed to catch her, he would telegraph for her to be stopped at the terminus in London. This revelation of Jack’s meaning so overwhelmed her with terror, that she felt as I imagine a young kitten did ten minutes ago, who crouched hopelessly within a circle of angry dogs all bent on her destruction. She would give it all up. She should be taken and tried, and mercifully sent to a reformatory to herd with abandoned women. She was to be plunged into corruption to make her incorruptible ; but whatever might be her fate, she could no longer contend against it. Helena did not reproach her mother or her father for the destitution of her life, that had resulted



from the unprincipled yielding to impulse in one, and the equally unprincipled extravagance of the other. She was the victim of the combination of the sins of her parents, and they were visited on their child, of whom both were fond in their way.

When the girl had nearly arrived at the terminus, the ticket porter came.

"How's this? Second-class ticket!" said the man, sternly.

"Please, sir, the guard called William said I was to say it was a mistake."

The man winked. "A mistake!—then give me a shilling."

Helena produced her shilling, and the porter added, "Better get out here, and you will get out before the rush of passengers comes up. Is this all?" he said, taking the bag.

"Yes—all," said Helena, gladly availing herself of his extended arms to lift her out. Then he went on to the next carriage, and Helena sped along the platform, thinking every moment that a policeman would dart out and catch her by the shoulder.

"Cab, miss!" said the men as she passed, but the girl remembered Jack's injunction.

Presently she saw an omnibus with the name of a familiar locality on it. She got in, and resolved to go and ask the servants at Mrs. Delacy's establishment if they knew the address of Mrs. Crew, the cook, who used to live there. She was so safe in her feeling about the supposed purloined locket, that she did not mind going into what would have seemed to a guilty person to be "the lion's mouth."

The omnibus put her down at the corner of the street. She proceeded to the establishment of the lady, and going down the area steps she went into the kitchen and asked the cook if she could direct her to find Mrs. Crew, who had lived there formerly in the capacity which she now filled. She expressed this in a periphrasis, for such is considered by that class as being most "genteel."

Helena's appearance was much in her favour. Her mourning was new, and not very dusty, just sufficiently so as to prove that she was from the country. Had the person of whom

she inquired gone down in the world, she would probably have received a grumpy answer, but Mrs. Crew was flourishing in a small grocer's shop—a pinnacle of prosperity which became a beacon to all in that lady's profession ; moreover, there were sundry little dealings between the ex-cook and herself, which resulted in a warm friendship.

The cook, or rather the lady who prepared delicacies for the aristocratic progeny who were under the care of Mrs. Delacy, smiled, and took a sheet of her mistress's notepaper and a delicate pen, and wrote the address for which Helena inquired. It was not far off, and the girl soon found it and entered the shop, behind the counter of which sat the well remembered form of Mrs. Crew.

“What may you please to want, miss ?” she asked, rising.

“Oh ! Mrs. Crew, don't you remember me ? you used to say I was like your own little girl once.”

“Why, Miss Helena, to be sure ! What a beautiful young lady you've growed ; will you

come in and have a cup of tea ? Do, my dear ! if you arn't too proud after living with great lords and ladies."

"Helena asked her if she could recommend her a place where she could lodge for a few days."

"Stay here ; I've got a bedroom, and I sha'n't charge you. My girl would have been just such an one as you if she had been alive. Tea now, my dear, but after the shop's shut, I have a nice bit of supper. I keep a girl now to wait on me."

The evening passed cheerfully on the part of the hostess, and less sadly for Helena. Mrs. Crew told how she had come in for a fine bit of money she did not expect, and had invested in this small shop that answered well, and of which the custom was increasing. A good deal was intermixed with the life at Mrs. Delacy's, and the young ladies who were there brought up, and of the various servants who had lived there with Mrs. Crew when she presided in the kitchen.

Helena interrupted rather eagerly. "Oh !

but do tell me—that locket of Miss Vandeleur's, was it ever found ?”

“ Why, yes, to be sure, miss ; did you not know that ? You see, 'twas a brooch as well as a locket—they're made so. Well, there was a large jar of preserved plums ; they had been sent to Mrs. Delacy from the country, and she kept them herself. Well, them plums they were done with the stones in 'um—a cheap way—saves trouble, but 'twas all the worse for miss in the long run, for stones keep the acid just like flints in the land keep the moisture. The young lady was greedy and found the door unlocked one day, and went and leant over the great plum jar, eating as far as she could, and dropped her fine brooch down into it. Of course she never heard it fall, and did not miss the pretty trinket for some little bit after. Then there was a hue and cry, and folks were accused of stealing it, and the police was sent for, and those suspected who had never taken a pennyworth in their lives. And then behold, just as mistress was giving me out the last of the preserve to make a roll

pudding, out she ladled the locket. Oh! dear, there was a queer-looking thing; the brilliants looked like lead, and the gold tarnished, but there was the H. V. in diamonds as plain as a pikestaff; so Miss Vandeleur's greediness was shown, and her mamma was so ashamed she gave presents here and there and everywhere to hush it up."

Helena gave a long sigh of relief; she could not now be accused of an imaginary crime. That was done with. She wondered at mademoiselle's malice towards her, but then Helena was only fourteen, and knowing nothing of the tender passion did not understand the untender ones it excited in unworthy bosoms—envy, hatred, and malice.

Mademoiselle had repeated to herself, "The man must be a *fool*! a positive fool, to consider that unformed child beautiful, when he knows *me*!"

But to return to Helena and her hostess—all with whom they were mutually acquainted were inquired after by Helena. Mr. Cann, the writing and arithmetic master especially, be-

cause she had received most kindness from him in the course of tuition, and he had found in her an intelligent pupil, whilst the other young ladies yawned over the mysteries of the rule of three and practice, though several wrote good hands under his direction.

“Oh! my dear Miss Vernon, he is the writing master still. Mrs. Cann keeps an office for servants who want places. I often send girls to her who may be trusted, and she makes a pretty penny, for she manages to provide good ones, though to be sure 'tis dear.”

“Everything is dear now, it seems to me,” with a sigh; “but that can't matter to you,” said Helena, “because if you buy dear, you sell dear.”

“It does matter, for you see, Miss Helena, there's many more poor than rich, and so the poor can't pay the high prices, so I get fewer customers. I get a little compliment from Mrs. Cann when I manage to send her a good girl that suits, and that is worth having. Sometimes one *can't* get the right article; now we've both been trying for a young person to attend an

invalid lady, but, dear me ! 'tis so far off and such confinement, that girls turn up their noses at the situation—and so much expected ! The girl must be able to do sick cookery, to do accounts, never to go out except an hour a day for health sake, and once to meeting or to church on Sundays, and to be able to write a good hand, keep the household books, and read aloud nearly all day. This is what a young person told me who came back. She said she might as well live in a nunnery."

"Oh, Mrs. Crew, don't you think you could recommend me ?"

"Why, you are living with Lord Santly, ain't you ?"

"I left him this morning only. He thought 'twas time for me to go."

"Ah ! he always wanted you to be brought up useful to earn your bread, and that's why you were so much with Susan and me. Well, my dear, if you did not mind the distance. The rule is, Mrs. Lavender pays your fare down to Truro in Cornwall, and if you don't suit, you must pay yourself back, or get

another situation there. How soon could you go? You see the poor lady is being 'dry rubbed with huckaback,' as the song says, and has to put up with a charwoman till she gets somebody from Mrs. Cann."

"But will not Mrs. Cann want some reference?"

"Well, Miss Vernon! there's *me* to answer for you, a responsible householder, and there's Mr. Cann, who always speaks of you with tears in his eyes, because you was such a nice young lady, and you have never been in service before, so she can't have your character from your last place."

Helena desired nothing better than to go. She had the spring of hope that rarely dies out in youth; she forgot that nursing meant wearisome days and frequently anxious nights.

Good-natured Mrs. Crew tucked her up comfortably at night with a tender thought of her own lost girl, and on the following morning sent her shopboy with Helena's bag to the terminus, advancing money for her fare, and receiving from Helena a sovereign for Mrs. Cann, which

would entitle Helena to another chance should she fail in that to which she was going.

When this was accomplished, Helena received a letter from Mrs. Cann, stating that the young person who was the bearer of it had been known to Mrs. Cann's family since her childhood, and could be well recommended as likely to suit Mrs. Lavender for the situation for which Mrs. Lavender required a domestic.

With a more cheerful prospect for her future life, Helena took leave of her kind friend, who accompanied her to the station, that she might feel more cared for, and promising to write as soon as she was settled, she proceeded on her long journey to Cornwall.

The difference was great between first- and second-class on so long a journey, but Mrs. Crew thought, considering Helena's youth and great beauty, she would be safer from insult in a first-class carriage. She gave the guard a present to induce him to keep his eyes on the young lady, and to see occasionally if she required any assistance ; moreover, she had prepared a little parcel of sandwiches, that

Helena should not be shy of taking refreshments on the road.

Helena kissed her kind friend tearfully and affectionately as she leaned from the railway carriage—and watch her disappear as the train carried the young traveller on her way—with tender regret. Helena had not so often met with kindness as to be disregardful of its existence.

Her journey was uneventful. The guard came and spoke to her occasionally, taking care that she should have lady companions chiefly, or if gentlemen that ladies should also be in the carriage.

She slept at Plymouth that night as agreed with Mrs. Cann, who was anxious that she should not arrive at a late hour at the house of Mrs. Lavender. Helena was thankful for this rest, and started on the following morning with spirits refreshed by sleep.

In the afternoon of the day she reached Truro, and with a porter to carry her bag she proceeded to a handsome villa enclosed by massive gates and high walls, within which

stood Trevedra, the residence of Mrs. Lavender, the widow of a wealthy banker of that name.

Truro, as Helena passed through it, struck her as being one of the cleanest and quietest of towns, and when she reached Trevedra it struck her that neatness and silence had reached their acme in that house and its surroundings.

Accustomed to the wild loveliness of the park at Saint's Ley, she looked out at the sloping banks of exactly trimmed grass, without the slightest intrusion of any weed, with more wonder than admiration. Certainly, thought the girl, one may say "all things in order stored;" the gravel walks were perfectly level, and no pretentious stone was bigger than another. The box borders, of course, were all of perfect proportion.

Helena did not approach by the chief entrance, but passed by the offices ; a groom was putting in two sleek carriage horses after exercising them. A solemn stable cat sat in the window, her gray fur distinctly striped. Helena passed by a laundry and saw two women ironing, with the neatest of caps, white aprons, and gray

cotton gowns ; not a slate was crookedly laid on the tiles, not an inch of paint was damaged or dirty on the woodwork of the outbuildings.

Helena went up to the kitchen-door with her bag, and a quiet-looking middle-aged woman answered her light knock, who looked with some curiosity at the new comer, and she thought with some disapprobation.

“What may thy business be, friend ?”

“I have a letter for the lady—for your mistress,” said the girl timidly.

The woman moved off slowly, and said on returning that Friend Lavender would hear what she had to say ; “but,” added the cook primly, “it seems to me, young woman, that thy dress savours too much of the vanities of the world to find favour in the eyes of my mistress.”

CHAPTER XXII.

“ Hers was the sweetness of a withered rose,
Compressed between a paper’s spotless fold,
No vagrant charms her fettered thoughts disclose,
With every feeling, every word controlled.”

HELENA had not been aware of the vanities of the world as represented in her attire, but she followed the housemaid in silence through drab coloured passages well carpeted, which carpets were covered with brown holland—all was gray or drab ; as she passed some open windows, and looked out at the wealth of colour in the garden—roses of the finest sorts seen, flowers of gigantic size and deepest tint, nasturtiums in their deep orange contrasting with the royal purple of the dahlias—she wondered that they were allowed to enter their silent protest for beauty of colour.

She was conducted into a handsomely fur-

nished sitting-room looking on to the garden, whose brilliancy had so much dazzled the girl in passing. This garden sloped down a declivity, and at its base a fresh stream sparkled, a tributary to the Truro river.

Friend Lavender was seated with some plain work near the window. She made a slight movement as if to rise, but did not, being lame. She turned a face, charming in its bloom, sweetness, and intelligence on Helena, but the girl detected a look of disappointment in the inspection, and being sensitive and easily discouraged she stopped and hung her head.

Seeing that the Quakeress held out her hand for the letter, Helena advanced and presented it.

"I had expected," said the lady, "that Elizabeth Cann would have sent me a *Friend*."

"Mrs. Cann," murmured Helena, "was quite a friend."

"I would say that the lady that I expected that Elizabeth Cann would have sent one of the Society of Friends, called in the world Quakers."

To this Helena made no reply at first, but

after a moment's thought, she looked up sadly and said :—

“If you will try me, madam, I will do my best to serve you faithfully.”

“Thou shalt have a trial,” replied the Quakeress, to whom the sensitive twitching of Helena's lips pleaded for pity ; “but thou art very young, seventeen perchance ?”

“I am not seventeen,” said Helena, who was not quite fifteen ; but the trial of her services was to be made, and she did not think it worth while to particularize.

She was not occupied on the first evening otherwise than by assisting her mistress in making some baby clothes for the poor. Helena showed such knowledge and facility in plain work, that Mrs. Lavender asked by whom she had been taught, and Helena told her that she had learnt from the woman who had the care of linen in a large school, where she had partly earned her tuition by making herself useful ; in one thing alone she was corrected, she did not draw the threads before she cut the material.

“Remember that if it be worth doing, it is

worth doing *well*," said Mrs. Lavender, looking steadfastly at Helena, whilst her gray eyes glistened ; "and thou wilt do well to remember that in future."

On the following morning she was introduced to various birds, whose welfare was to be her care, if she remained in the service of Mrs. Lavender.

At eleven o'clock she was told to prepare a cup of coffee for her mistress, in which she was fortunate enough to please her. She read aloud, books of history or travel, and afterwards added up the washing accounts.

Mrs. Lavender liked Helena. She had no exuberant spirits to tame in her young attendant.

Helena's loss was too recent. The scenes she had passed through were too agonising to admit of cheerfulness. But the greater Friend Lavender's disposition to like Helena, the greater became the perplexity of her regard towards her.

Helena saw it, and wondered with a dull anxiety what was to come next.

It came at length.

"In memory of whom dost thou wear those black garments, Helena?"

"For my poor mamma," replied the girl, with a quiver of the lip.

"For thy *mother*, thou shouldst say; thou art no longer a child, and thou shouldst put away childish things. I had thought thou wert one of the Society of Friends. Thy black frock is a trial to me."

"I am sorry," Helena murmured.

"To what denomination of Christians dost thou belong?"

"My pa—my father and mother lie in the shadow of the church—All Hallows, near Oldchester."

"Dost thou desire to attend the service in thy steeple house?"—Helena looked puzzled—"that which thy denomination call a church?"

"Yes, madam," said the girl promptly.

"Helena, I shall want thy assistance on first day to lean on thy shoulder when I go to the Friends' meeting. Dost thou not see the incongruity there would be if thou wert in black with a hat which savours of this world's vanities,

when I am dressed in gray as becomes a Friend ? ”

“ I do not like to be disrespectful, madam, to my mother’s memory.”

“ Who knows in this far county that thy mother lives no longer ? Could thy mother know my desire, dost thou not think she would say, do as Friend Lavender would have thee do ? ”

“ If I go with you, madam, to the Friends’ meeting, would you allow me to attend the church once during the day in my black clothes ? ”

To this the Quakeress assented.

Fairly and softly was her mode of proceeding. She told Helena that it would be unjust to require her to buy clothes such as she was required to wear at the Friends’ meeting, and that she would provide such as were fitting.

Helena’s hair presented no difficulty. She had worn it plainly parted on the forehead, and fastened to the back of her head ; a small neat muslin cap was now to be worn over this. It was transparent and did not detract from the

beauty of the hair or the contour of the face. She smiled with an amused expression when she saw herself arrayed in the Quaker dress. She was consoled that she should wear mourning again in the evening. As Helena's personal vanity had not yet started into life, she cared not, except as regarded mourning, how she looked.

And in time the mourning wore out, and was replaced by Quaker colours and Quaker shapes of bonnets. Very plain indeed—plain in the sense of ugly, but Helena looked modest and beautiful in every disguise. The outward forms of purity in the mansion of Trevedra were but the indications of the blameless life spent by Mrs. Lavender and her household. The poor were visited and relieved; the sick ministered unto. No difference was made as to the creeds of the recipients of her bounty. Duty and tenderness to all suffering made her beneficent to human creatures, but to the animal kingdom was her secret devotion most intense. Creatures which seemed marked out for the oppression or cruelty of bipeds, were sure of her protection and defence.

Helena was a willing pupil, and carried out schemes which her mistress's infirmity precluded her from partaking.

Then the maiden and her mistress would feel that sympathy in the same pursuits, which is the surest bond of friendship.

When her mourning had worn out she felt, as did Mrs. Lavender, that she could not wear the Friends' bonnet at church without attracting too much notice. One of the same colour, and most simple form surmounted her slender shawled figure ; and when the pealing organ was joined by the full-voiced choir, Helena's voice was the richest and sweetest in the old cathedral church.

Thus flowed on the life of Helena till her eighteenth year.

On the day of Helena's departure in a way so unceremonious from the protection of Lord Santly, Doctor Abner was desired to call if he were not too much occupied, on Lord Santly, who did not feel quite well. Of course Doctor Abner went as soon as he received the message, rather vexed that he had been out, and going a

long round before he arrived at home, so that it was late before he reached Saints Ley.

As he entered the park he saw mademoiselle awaiting him, but he only kissed his hand and drove on at a fast trot. She will wait for me, he thought, and he was in a hurry to make his apologies to Lord Santly for having a largely diffused set of patients.

“ My pulse is too quick, Doctor.”

“ Yes, sir, from eight to ten beats quicker than usual.”

“ The fact is,” said Lord Santly, “ I have been much annoyed at finding that the daughter of a distant relative of mine has been misconducting herself gravely, in fact, that she has been in the habit of stealing out at night, and remaining away a great part of the day, and had disgraced herself by the theft of a locket before she came to me. Indeed, Miss Sable, her governess, who has contrived to screen her hitherto, *she* says from pity—I suppose because she did not like to leave an easy berth—declares she knew that the locket had been stolen, but was not aware who had been the

thief till she saw the trinket in the shop of Mr. Lewis, and found that Helena Vernon had sold it or pledged it. On this Miss Sable, without consulting me, spoke to the police, and the girl was to have been arrested yesterday, but managed to escape in a most indecorous manner, pursued by the policeman."

Doctor Abner heard with great concern.

Let it be observed that Lord Santly said nothing of having found Helena's hand in his bag of gold—for two reasons: he felt ashamed of having confided in so young a girl, and he did not wish it to be known that he kept so much gold in the house.

"Is your lordship certain of the facts—about the bad company I mean?"

"I learnt these circumstances from Miss Sable, who could have had no motive for inventing them."

Doctor Abner was silent. He scarcely believed that mademoiselle could be so malicious, yet he was by no means certain that it might not be possible. A closer acquaintance had revealed several unattractive traits in that beauti-

ful female ; and, moreover, Doctor Abner felt sure she meant to marry him, and by no means sure that such a fact would be beneficial to him. He had been reading on the previous evening, in the pleasant solitude of his little study, an account of the hunter wasp—how it eyed an unfortunate domestic spider, coming round and round in smaller circles, whilst the argus-eyed insect tried to creep stealthily away, as if he did not know that his enemy was closing on him, till, with a sudden nimble run, increased by mortal terror, he took refuge under a bed, and was there taken and killed.

It was not quite fair on mademoiselle. His learning under her tuition had been so incessant and so successful, that he could read scientific works on surgery, with but little aid from a dictionary ; in truth his knowledge of the subjects treated of, made him even quicker at the solution of a difficult passage than the lady herself.

“ However, he must be true to himself,” he said, as he drove back through the park, and jumping out when he saw mademoiselle, he walked by her side demurely.

"Oh! Doctor Abner—I have the news for you—your lessons are finished, and me, I go away."

"Indeed! I am greatly concerned," said the Doctor, in a cheerful tone, for which she could have shaken him.

"Yes—your beauty—she have stole the locket of Miss Vandeleur, and she have run away, so I have no pupil—none."

She raised her hands and let them fall again in a gesture of despair. The Doctor was silent.

"Ven I look at the big trees, and the fresh flowers I have seen so long walking here, where I have been so happy—I weep."

"No, no, pray don't," said the tender-hearted Doctor, "I can't bear to see a woman cry—you especially, mademoiselle, who have been so kind and instructive to me. Now tell me about my beauty, as you call a girl I have never spoken to in my life—from whom did she steal the locket?"

Miss Sable's features became sparkling with malice.

“I was at the school with *the beauty*, and with a little girl called Miss Harriet Vandeleur. Her mamma give her a locket with brilliants—very handsome. It was lost—stole—I see the locket in Mr. Lewis’ shop. He say Miss Vernon what you call pawn it for five pounds. It worth seventy-five—brilliants so grand. I tell him Miss Helena stole locket—he tell policeman to take her before the gentlemen—she run away—she know she guilty.”

“Where does Miss Vandeleur live?” asked the Doctor.

“It is quite true what I say,” said the young lady, angrily. “Mrs. Vandeleur lives at No. — in Belgrave Square, but you had better write and ask at the school, for the mistress was altogether miserable at the unfortunate circumstance.”

“You will not leave the neighbourhood of Oldchester *yet*, mademoiselle?” said the Doctor, insinuatingly.

“But it suits not that I stay with my lor’ without my pupil—no, never! Think of the *propriétaires*.”

"He must ask me to be his wife now," thought the lady—"he can never tell me go," and she turned away, leaving to his gaze a cheek richly bronzed and delicately tinted with a fugitive colour. How round it was—how graceful the turn of her throat!

Doctor Abner felt his resolution giving way. "I hope to see you once more," he said, jumping into his gig. "Safety in flight," he thought; "she is too beautiful for an honest fellow to resist when she looks at one in that way." He drove to the police station and inquired whether any communication had been made to Mrs. Vandeleur as to the recovery of her daughter's locket.

"Why, yes, sir, and considering that we were sharp for her interest, I must say the lady seems rather ungrateful, not to say uncivil. Here is her letter:—

"The Honourable Mrs. Vandeleur begs to state that Miss Vandeleur's locket is in her own possession, and that the chief of the Oldchester police has given himself needless trouble. The

Honourable Mrs. Vandeleur begs that she may not be applied to again on the subject."

"A pretty mess you have made of it, Mr. Herring, to attempt to take up a respectable young lady for theft."

"It was the governess that peached upon her, and set me on," said the man, sullenly.

Whilst Doctor Abner was speaking a freckle-faced, snub-nosed boy seemed to be waiting to speak to him, and when the Doctor turned away Jack followed him.

"I want to carry out physic for you, sir—I'll serve you well—and Jim says he's a-going to leave you."

"I'll consider of it," said the Doctor, walking on.

Jack followed. "Looks down in the mouth," said he, indicating the policeman standing at the corner, who cast a sulky glance in Jack's direction. "He has got a scratch on his face where he caught it against the rough corner of the stub when he fell into the river a-running arter poor Miss Helena."

“What do you know about Miss Helena?”

“Lor’, bless you, I knowed all about her when the poor chap was a-dying in the off-hand farm there, and that I heard tell was her father, and then a poor lady come to Mr. Dyer’s to lodge. Says she to me, ‘I’ll give you three shillings if you can go and bring my little girl to see me; she lives in the great house at Saint’s Ley. They call her Helena.’ So I went, and the girl she runned, and when she went to the poor lady’s room they kissed and cried, and it made me most cry to hear them, as I stood ’gin the door. But, Lor’! she was a dying then—you must have seed her yourself, sir, that day you comed to look at the room and master—my master that was, said he’d put her in jail for not paying her debts, and I take it, miss sold the locket to pay master and them.”

“Did any one visit the lady but Miss Helena?”

“Nobody—miss took her to Widder Wallace—I used to look in at the winder sometimes—I was wonderful fond of the lady—she was allers a giving me something—she gove me this silk hankicher to wear round my neck.”

"She was a wonderful proud lady, couldn't bear to own to poverty."

"I used to run errands for her, but after she went to Wallace's I didn't, and then Miss Helena did, I suppose; but, Lor'! I said to Miss Helena, she's a dying, she is."

"Who stayed with her at night?" asked the Doctor, who had a motive in his cross-examination.

"Miss Helena took a notion that the nus wasn't good to her ma, and then she come and stayed herself. Master sent me to the public house to get some brandy when missis was took faint, that was two in the morning, and I saw Miss Helena crossing the street to the Widder Wallace's. She warn't afraid of nothing to get to her ma."

The account of the poor girl's devotion to her dying mother filled Doctor Abner with pity and admiration. He took the earliest opportunity of calling on Lord Santly to tell him in whom consisted Helena's bad company—a lodging-housekeeper, a nurse, and a dying mother.

Lord Santly had been uneasy at the notion of keeping so much gold in the house. He had heard rumours of the bank's insolvency, which had led him to conceal it in his bureau ; but on second thought, and hearing a more favourable account of its resources, he put his money in his carriage and drove to Oldchester, where he requested the chief clerk to come into the carriage and count out every bag, giving him a receipt for the amount.

The second bag was one with which Helena had tampered, and when Lord Santly shook it out, a piece of white paper containing two rings fell from it. "Dear me, my lord ! Ladies' rings—valuable stones—I wonder they have not been scratched by attrition with the gold !"

"Yes—quite an accident," said my lord, putting the rings into his waistcoat-pocket, remembering then that Helena had said something of rings, to which in his rage he had not attended.

Before he returned home he took the rings to his jeweller to be valued, and heard the

statement that the ring with the diamond was worth one hundred and seventy pounds. The emerald ring: eighty pounds.

He understood now, when he had listened to Doctor Abner's statement, the agony of mind with which she had entreated him to give her money. He scarcely understood how she had obtained his gold, but she had evidently replaced it, and was trying to regain the rings which she had left as a kind of pledge—a salve to her conscience, if she were unable to replace the gold.

He locked up the rings, and thought that he must find the girl out and return them. It was very inconvenient that he should be troubled by poor Vernon's faithless and dying wife and orphan daughter: she had been so handy, and was so acute, and had seemed so honest—"all jades alike not worth their salt. I must, I suppose, look out for a secretary, a filthy fellow, redolent of cigars. No one has the slightest regard for my comfort, and here is Abner himself, far more excited about a trumpery little girl than he is at the acceleration of

my pulse," and Lord Santly felt exceedingly aggrieved.

On one point he was determined.

"I will not have that French slut any longer in the house ; but for her nonsense about the locket, Helena would not have been driven away, nor should I have had to do my weekly bills."

And Lord Santly, unconscious of the poetical justice of which he was the agent, desired Doctor Abner to inform Miss Sable that as she had killed the goose which had laid the golden egg, her services would be no longer required.

"You will do this with due regard to the young lady's feelings, Doctor," said the peer, with a little suspicion that the Doctor was a susceptible man, and therefore his lordship had a cynical enjoyment in the look he had given him. He calculated the sum due to Miss Sable, for which he drew a cheque, adding a quarter in advance.

Thus armed, Doctor Abner wrote a pleasant note to the young lady, regretting deeply that he was called away by telegram, which would

prevent his thanking her as he ought for the benefit he had derived from her instructions ; for these he added a cheque of his own for the exact amount due to her. He did this to prevent a correspondence which might arise if she were too proud to receive a present.

Miss Sable, collecting her money, was not badly off. As the Doctor had been an object of calculation only, and not of affection, her eyes were as bright, her cheeks as round, and her ways as winning as usual, consequently she felt she had the same weapons at command, and had only to look out for another prey.

CHAPTER XXIII.

“ And on that cheek, and o’er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that beam, the cheeks that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent.”

MRS. LAVENDER held the usual opinion, that changing the air occasionally oiled the springs of life, and as she loved seclusion, she had built for herself a small cottage on the coast of Cornwall, overlooking the sea, at some distance from the village of Saint Jude and its parish church. Here she carried out her usual occupations, and was worshipped as a saint by the sparse fishing population near her. She was compelled, by her lameness, to sit at the window and inhale the fresh breezes, but Helena might ramble where she liked up and down the crags, and she enjoyed her liberty and the sight of the deep-coloured cliffs, and

the green water which dashed into foam at their base.

On Sunday she went to the village church for the morning service. It was too far for walking twice a-day. On the first occasion she had secured the attention of an old sexton for a pew for half-a-crown, and had been conducted to the best pew in the church. As she imagined that so large a sum would give her a choice for a future sitting, she walked to the church, on the second occasion, with full assurance of a pew.

When she reached the church it was closed. A heap of soft mortar and a pile of bricks were in the churchyard. She did not know, what was patent to the whole parish, that the church was shut up for repairs. The old sexton toddled from his embowered cottage and told her that of which her senses had already informed her.

"Where do the congregation go on Sundays?" she asked.

The sexton said some went to one church, some to another; more people went to the Wesleyan meeting.

"Which church would be nearest to my home?" And she told him where it was situated.

After some thought, he directed her to Polvedra Springs—anyone would tell her the way.

"But I don't want water," said the girl; "I want a church."

"Living water, which if ye drink ye shall thirst no more," said the old man. "You will find Polvedra Springs is the name of a gentleman's park. There is a small church there, and service once a-day for the village people and the servants, when the family are at home, but there ain't no family at home, and no servants now, only the folks in the village. They say he is a fine gentleman what preaches, but they don't say much about the clerk," said the old man, who filled that office as well as that of sexton.

Mrs. Lavender, being too far from a Friends' meeting-house, sat in the silence of her own sitting-room, on first day, in devout meditation. Helena found no difficulty in discovering the locality of Polvedra Springs. She entered a large park at some distance from the church,

the old gray tower of which was scarcely visible from its covering of luxurious ivy, by which it was merged in the colouring of the trees. The park seemed lonely, and from their lair in the deep fern, troops of deer started up, scared by Helena's appearance; those, and a bird rising suddenly in the air, were the only living creatures she could see.

On reaching the church, she was struck by its beauty. Formed of white stone, which makes the buildings in Cornwall so refined in their tint and structure, Nature had played her usual pranks in decking the surface with varied coloured lichen, where the luxurious ivy allowed the surface to appear.

The rival sexton and clerk occupied a small cottage outside the park, but he had opened the church-door, seemingly to admit air and sunshine in preparation for the service.

"It will not begin for half an hour yet," he said, touching his forelock in return for the shilling Helena gave him.

"You have service here every Sunday?" she asked, anxiously.

"Yes, miss—in the afternoon to-day ; next Sunday in the morning. I'll put you into the Squire's pew. He is never here—always roaming over the seas, seems to me."

"What a beautiful church!" said the girl, looking at the stained glass windows and the perfection of neatness and repair in which it was kept inside.

"Yes—I do a deal myself," said the old man. "And the Squire, he takes a pride in keeping it done up, though he don't often see it. Seems to me them as is born to fine estates ought to live on them."

"Had I had that luck," said Helena, smiling, "I think I should never have wished to leave the place."

"That's right, miss. Now, I have never been away more than once in my life. I was took as far as Truro ; but, bless you, their cathedral, with the sharp top, ain't to be compared to this beautiful old church, and there was such a rush of folks about, and such a din of carriages, 'twas a hard job to feel like a godly man should." So saying, he showed Helena

into the largest pew. There was a small locked cupboard under the seat, but he observed that Helena had a prayer-book, and therefore did not want one.

The clergyman came—a worn-out old gentleman—but his feeble voice and gentle infirm manner seemed in accordance with the small old church. A Boanerges would have been utterly incongruous. She curtseyed to him when she left the churchyard to return home, for he had left the vestry by the time she had completed her contemplation of an exquisite monument of a sleeping female, by Chantrey, which occupied the western end of the church. “The Squire’s mother,” the sexton whispered. There were other monuments, of crusaders and warriors, whose banners dropped slowly from the iron rod from which they waved, and whose helmets still frowned sternly from under their flags, embroidered by coats of arms, and the peculiar battle cries used by their owners.

These interested Helena, whilst they filled her with awe. The church seemed to contain the ashes of generations of the same family, and

when they had fallen and been buried in foreign lands, their deeds were recorded, and their memories invoked by mural tablets placed to the dead of the race of Falconburg.

Helena had observed the name, under the monument, of the lady—Geraldine Falconburg—who died in 18—, aged thirty-seven years.

“BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART, FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD.”

When she went back she told Mrs. Lavender what she had seen, and that lady, who was a convinced Quaker, remembered enough of the charm of a village church to sympathise with her admiration for that at Polvedra Springs.

“The old sexton had a tiresome cough and hoarseness,” Helena said. And Mrs. Lavender sent him a box of jujube lozenges by her.

The old man boasted of the gift, and said how much benefit he had derived from the remedy, and pressed some on the little old clergyman; so he received a box also in due course. Thus the slender girl, in her gray shawl and bonnet, and dress to match, and with only the brilliant and delicate colour of her

beautiful face to protest against the dull surroundings, was considered as a charming attendant at the little church in Polvedra Park.

In the week-days Helena spent much of her time on the beach. She was never tired of gazing on the advancing billows, and seeing them curl under, and carry away, the sand or pebbles, leaving unsubstantial froth in their place. There was one small ledge of rocks where it was her pleasure to sit for hours with a book, shaded, by the projecting point of a cliff, from the sun, and from the rude winds. Above *her* platform, as she called it, there was another, but so difficult of attainment, that Helena, though she had become a pretty expert crags-woman, had never ventured to attempt what, in failing, might cost her a broken neck.

"Thou wilt lay in a stock of rude health, child, for the winter, by inhaling the sea breezes so constantly." Mrs. Lavender was certain to see the looked-for face, of which she had learned to love the sweetness, when the shadows of evening had begun to gather over the sea-line.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"Where through the long drawn-aisle and fretted vault
The pealing anthem wakes the note of praise."

ONE Sunday Helena entered the pew as usual, and waited for the psalm to begin.

Before this, however, a tall gentleman entered the pew, and, after a glance of wonder at finding its occupier, he proceeded to take out his prayer-book and a collection of hymns.

When the hymn was sung he glanced stealthily at his companion, who was feeling very like an interloper, and whose eye he caught seeking his face with a pleading look which was very disturbing of his tranquillity.

She did not look again, however, having been caught in the fact.

Whilst the psalms were read Richard Falconburg looked down on the beautiful face which felt abashed by the suspected scrutiny.

He was a man very reserved and distant. His first feeling, at seeing his pew occupied, had been one of indignation ; by the time the psalm was to be sung he had quite forgiven the intrusion ; before it was finished he felt that he would not have missed hearing that divine voice on any account. Whilst Helena sang she forgot every object in the universe, and poured out a contrite spirit to her Maker in the words which seem written for her use especially. The music suited the words, which were those in the prayer-book :

“ Have mercy, Lord, on me,
As Thou wert ever kind,
Let me, oppressed by loads of guilt,
Thy wonted pity find.
Wash out my foul offence,
And cleanse me from my sin,
For I confess my crime and see
How great my guilt has been.”

The psalm was set by a former organist of Truro—Hempel—in four flats, and breathed the very soul of penitence. “How great my guilt,” in this setting, is thrice repeated, and each time with increasing pathos.

Helena, in the pure life she had led with Friend Lavender, had become conscious of the carelessness of her early training, of her own sin, and of the guilt of her dearest mamma. Somehow she identified herself with her. Helena's love had been so tender to her in life, increased by the consciousness that their natural positions had been reversed, and that her mamma had no one to cling to but herself, that now she was gone from her for ever her love was even more profound. All the same, she knew that she was shadowed by her mother's guilt,—that she partook it. It was the sin of the parent reflected on the child.

Her friend had never alluded to this circumstance. She had taken Helena on Mrs. Cann's recommendation, and that of her old servant, who would not, she knew, deceive her willingly. Afterwards, becoming more attached to Helena, she had written direct to Lord Santly, not understanding Helena's reserve and distress when any allusion had been made to her parents.

His lordship's answer was this :

“MADAM,—Helena Vernon lived with me some time under the charge of a French governess, her only claim being that her father was very distantly related to me. It was my intention that she should earn her living, and I am glad she has fallen into good hands. I beg you to give her two rings which belonged probably to her deceased mother, which she left in my hands, and which I now enclose, registered.

“I have the honour to be, madam,

“Yours, &c.,

“SANTLY.”

Helena turned very pale when Mrs. Lavender placed the letter and the rings in the hands of the girl. She trembled as she read it, and felt grateful that Lord Santly had not told all ; but not the less did the crime weigh on her mind and colour her existence.

She put the rings away, and was happiest when she could forget all the circumstances connected with them.

Now, as she sang the notes with which she had become familiar in Truro cathedral, she

thought not of the beautiful little church which her voice filled, nor of the congregation. Her eyes—so like her father's in their plaintive, pleading look—were raised towards the heaven which was shut out by the old oak roof, but it mattered not, her communing was of the mind.

When the sermon began she looked at the preacher, for his voice was low and indistinct, and she guessed, by the movement of his lips, the meaning of his sentences. Sometimes her eyes wandered to a mural tablet near the pulpit to the memory of a Falconburg, who had fallen at Edge Hill, fighting for his king. She had sometimes asked Mr. Fortescue questions about the beautiful lady in marble, and this knight, in whose death she felt interest, for most young people are more interested in the Stuarts than in the Roundheads.

She had in her pocket a little gift for the old man—six cambric handkerchiefs, with his name neatly marked in the old-fashioned manner, for Friend Lavender, though she quite approved the gift, was resolved not to sanction the roses and the lilies with which Helena wished to

meander in satin stitch in ornamentation of the initials. She went out of the pew curtseying timidly to the seeming owner of it, and, going round to the other door, she waited for Mr. Fortescue's appearance. He soon came, and Helena produced her little gift with much hesitation and many blushes ; and whilst this was going on she was unconscious that Mr. Falconburg had come up over the soft turf behind her, till he had grasped the delicate hand of the little clergyman in his larger and more powerful fingers.

Kindly greetings past, and, to the astonishment expressed by the clergyman at seeing him, he answered that he had only arrived on the previous evening, and had anchored his yacht in the bay close in to the shore, so that it was scarcely seen from above the cliffs.

There was a little pause, and Helena, blushing like a rose, said she must apologize for her intrusion in the pew, adding, innocently :

" I always have sat there every summer, and I was never found out before. I felt so ashamed of being there."

Mr. Falconburg smiled. " You were like the

valet, who said he did not mind telling a lie, but it hurt his conscience to be found out. However, Miss —— ”

“Vernon,” said Helena.

“You are quite welcome to occupy the pew whenever you please. Pray, make no scruple in doing so.”

Mr. Fortescue took Helena’s hand. There was a tone of badinage at the beginning of the younger man’s speech which grated roughly on the ear of the refined old man, who felt tenderly towards his young lady friend.

“Miss Vernon has often asked me about your ancestors, Mr. Falconburg, and I have told her all I could remember. I thought you would allow us to see some of the treasures of your picture gallery, especially such portraits as represent those to whom these monuments are erected.”

“Certainly ; the house is not in order to receive visitors, but the ‘pale smile of beauties in the grave’ are shining there independent of brown holland covers on the furniture. Can you come now ?”

Mr. Fortescue assented, for there was no afternoon service, and his luncheon was a cold one, and Helena knew that her friend would not be alarmed at her staying away half an hour later than usual, so they followed Mr. Falconburg into a hall of carved oak, round which there were placed suits of armour and helmets, battle-axes, and spears. The stained glass flung brilliant patterns of rich colours over the sombre walls with their ancient panoplies. They passed through the large dining-room filled with pictures of field sports, fruit, dead game, &c. &c., for which Helena did not care, till they came to the portrait gallery. There they saw a fine full-length by Vandyke of Sir Redgrave Falconburg, who had fallen at Edge Hill. His wife, young and beautiful, secluded herself from the world after his death, and lived and died in this house, and was buried in the chancel of this church. Her son was worthy of his mother, and the lady he chose as his wife equalled his mother in beauty and virtue. To the corrupt court of Charles II. they steadily declined to go. There was noble

work around them, and they lived and died amongst their tenants and the poor, whose ignorance they pitied and whose distress they relieved.

Mr. Falconburg warmed with enthusiasm when he came to the portrait of his mother.

"I never think of her without reverence," he observed.

"With all that wealth could supply to corrupt with its luxury, and to degrade with its sloth, she was ever simple, energetic, economical, and active. She never belied her word, she never pretended to a feeling she did not possess; she had the sweetness of a woman, combined with the strict honour and truth of a gentleman.

"She died too early for me,—

" ' My boast is not that I derive my birth
From loins enthroned and rulers of the earth ;
But higher far my proud pretensions rise,
I boast of parents passed into the skies.' "

His face became almost beautiful in the enthusiasm of his manner and the flashing of his eyes.

Helena became depressed, and said she could not remain any longer. So when the inspection of the gallery was finished they walked down to the door, and, curtsying to Mr. Falconburg, and holding out her hand to Mr. Fortescue, who pressed it tenderly and bowed low, Helena went down the park in the direction of the coast.

"Is she going alone? Is she not afraid?" asked Mr. Falconburg.

"As strong in innocence as triple mail, I suppose," said the clergyman.

"Humph! I don't call it safe," said the younger man.

"I never thought of danger," rejoined Mr. Fortescue, "nor seemingly does she, nor her friend."

"Who is she?"

"The Friend?"

"No, the girl—the young lady?"

"I believe she is half attendant and whole companion to the lady with whom she lives—a most estimable person. She sent me a box of jujubes that have all but cured my cough. This

Quakeress is wealthy, and has built herself a small house which she occupies during the summer months. She is lame, and goes out only in a carriage."

"This pretty girl, therefore, goes about alone. I suppose she is low born?" asked Mr. Falconburg.

"On that point I can give you no information," said the clergyman. "Her hands and feet, at any-rate, are thoroughbred."

Mr. Falconburg amused himself on board his yacht during the week, but on the following Sunday he again occupied his pew in the small church, looking at the door, nearest to it, every time it opened. He had calculated on Helena's coming as a certainty, and was conscious of a little feeling of disappointment when the opening psalm was concluded without the exquisite charm given to it by her rich voice.

The absolution was read. "No one," said he to himself, angrily, "has a right to enter the church after the confession, unless they have no sins to repent. I shall not give her up till the second lesson," he thought.

Then his ideas wandered. "What nonsense to care whether she comes or not. There are dozens of high-bred girls whom I see in London every season, and don't care to see again. It is only that this girl is—

" ' Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the skies.' "

"Your young lady has not appeared to-day," he said, in a tone of reproach, after the service to the little clergyman.

"No," said Mr. Fortescue. "She is my most constant attendant in the summer months when Mrs. Lavender is in the neighbourhood, but I suppose the sight of another occupant of the pew was too much for her."

"I really cannot promise to vacate my place on her account," said the gentleman, with some degree of ill-humour.

"My dear sir," said the clergyman, "we parsons, in these days of Dissent, are thankful for small mercies, and count our chickens carefully. A nice young lady for the summer months being quiet and devout, and singing like

all the angels at the Nativity blended into one voice, is hardly compensated for by the presence of the landlord for one Sunday only. If you promise to attend regularly, on the strength of your position and the example given by your presence, I will excuse the lack of the forty nightingale power in your throat."

"To please you, I suppose," said Mr. Falconburg, "I must forswear sack and live cleanly like a gentleman."

"By all means. Marry and bring us down a Lady Adeliza or a Lady Florenza, and if she be a penniless lass with a long pedigree, it will not matter to you, who have wealth and to spare."

"Yes, but I want to marry into a family where all the men are *sans peur* and the women are *sans reproche*. I think everything of *race*."

"What! You have been studying the *Racing Calendar*, or Sam Slick?"

"Not the *Racing Calendar*. A horse is one of the noblest of animals. It is a pity that no one can touch him and keep their hands clean. About Sam Slick. What says he?"

“In his recommendation to men to marry or not to marry, I forget which, he says, ‘If you wish to know what the conduct of your future wife will be, see what that of her mother has been.’”

“That Halliburton was a sensible fellow. The advice is excellent,” said Mr. Falconburg.

“If every man acted on it, there would be fewer cases requiring legal sundering.”

“Yes, quite true ; and so you will think till you fall in love.”

“Pshaw, man ! no one has arrived at my age without going through the phases of that insanity. ’Tis the raving of youth, which, like other diseases incident to the period, seldom attacks us in age.”

After this the little clergyman turned the conversation to parochial matters, and found a willing coadjutor in the landlord.

CHAPTER XXV.

"I weep, and however thy foes may condemn,
My tears shall efface their decree,
For Heaven can witness though guilty to them,
I have been but too faithful to thee."

As Helena walked home she felt irritated against Mr. Falconburg and depressed from the difference between them. Her poor mamma had not even a headstone to mark where her dear body had been laid.

Yes! how dear her mother was to her lying in that lonely unknown grave no one would ever know.

This great gentleman had had a beautiful monument placed in memory of his mother, and Helena had thought of placing a stone over the grave of hers; but she hesitated, for would it not prolong that mother's shame? What name could she have carved on the

marble? She thought of "Claudine." Then people would say—"Claudine!—who was Claudine?" and those who remembered would reply—"Oh! she was a woman who ran away from her husband and lived with another man."

"Oh! mamma! mamma!" she wept in her sorrow—"must no one weep for you but your wretched daughter? On me you lavished your tenderness, and by me at least your memory shall be cherished."

Helena was the possessor of rather more than forty pounds. Her mistress, anxious that Helena's dress should be according to her taste, generally gave her the materials, and the girl made them up herself. In being thus liberal, Friend Lavender wished to teach Helena to save some money for any sudden emergency, such as her own death. She had left the girl a small annuity, so that she could not be quite destitute, but Helena was young and so clever and useful that Friend Lavender saw no reason why she should live in idleness, when the money uselessly lavished on her might sustain life in the old and helpless.

It was out of this forty pounds Helena had thought of erecting a memorial stone. Her locket she had regained from Mr. Lewis, by paying an extravagant sum for interest on the five pounds ; but she was glad to get back her mamma's gift at any price.

To Jack she sent a post-office order for five pounds. He had saved her the pain and disgrace of appearing before the magistrates, on a charge which, though unfounded, would have been painful to suffer.

Mr. Falconburg was haunted by the remembrance of Helena.

"Poor girl! her dress was very plain, but how elegant in its simplicity—'Plain in thy neatness.' How wonderfully Milton expresses that translation—the Quaker garb."

He whistled to his Skye terrier and walked off in the direction of Mrs. Lavender's cottage, at an early hour on Monday morning. It was all on the way towards his yacht. Brisk enjoyed being on shore—his gambols were restricted in his master's vessel. "The Creator must have been beneficent who made you so

enjoy the mere pleasure of existence," said the gentleman, addressing his dog, as he went on in endless gambols, galloping to his master's feet, and then in pretended terror rushing off till nearly out of sight, and hiding behind some withered fern.

In the midst of these gyrations Mr. Falconburg heard the sudden bark of his favourite.

"Flushed some game, no doubt," he thought, when a turn in the path revealed the soft gray dress of Helena, who was caressing with ungloved hand the shaggy head of the Skye terrier.

Mr. Falconburg raised his hat and smiled, whilst Helena raising herself had tears in her eyes.

"You seem fond of dogs," said the gentleman.

"I had a dog once," she said, simply and sadly—and Mr. Falconburg knew the pain of the past tense, and did not pursue the subject.

"You will think I am always trespassing, Mr. Falconburg; but when I was returning home yesterday week, after you had kindly

shown me your house, I lost my glove, and I dared not stay to seek for it, lest I should alarm Mrs. Lavender ; and now I am anxious to find it, so I will wish you good morning."

"Is it very important?" he asked.

She smiled.

"Yes, to me, for I am very careless, and Mrs. Lavender will be vexed at the extravagance of losing a new glove. I only put it on yesterday for the first time, and the colour is like that of the dead fern!"

"Never mind," said the gentleman, warmed into enthusiasm, "we will find it; will you give me the other glove for an instant?"

She drew it off and gave it in silence, and he observed the thoroughbred hand of which Mr. Fortescue had spoken.

"Here, Brisk! search!" he cried, holding the glove to him. "Hie, good dog! search!"

Away went Brisk, hunting about in the brushwood, whilst Helena stood with her companion in a knoll of old oaks and tall fern, partly withered and partly fresh. He looked at her, wondering whether she was happy with

the Quaker lady—such a dull life for a girl so beautiful. The dog had disappeared.

“Dost thou think he will find it?” she asked anxiously.

“Yes, I believe he will; but if he do not, I will give you a dozen pairs of the same kind, and then you may lose them with impunity.”

“Thou art kind, friend,” said Helena, who fell into the phraseology with which she was most familiar as soon as she ceased to feel restraint; “but though thy intention is good, it would not be right for me to accept them from thee on whom I have no claim.”

Mr. Falconburg thought of the avaricious eagerness with which young, honourable, and titled ladies had claimed gloves from him on imaginary bets, and he preferred the strange simplicity of his new acquaintance.

“Then you would not mind receiving the materials for making a new pair from Mrs. Lavender?”

“Not if I had worn out the gloves fairly, but I should be sorry that any one should suffer for my carelessness.”

"Mrs. Lavender has a sufficient income, has she not?"

"Whatever she can spare is spent on those who are in vital need thereof. If I spend carelessly, thou seest, I restrain the amount of her almsgiving; and in thus acting I commit a grave fault."

"You are as fond of Mrs. Lavender as if she were your mother; is it not so?"

She looked up suddenly with a frightened glance.

"Friend Lavender is most kind, but people can have but one mother," was her answer.

"You are right!" he exclaimed. "Oh! how I have felt this since——and so much depends on the mother's precept and example in the formation of one's character. Tennyson says:

'As the husband is, the wife is.'

I always think——'As the mother is, the child is,' which is much more probable from the tie of consanguinity."

Helena was silent, and when Mr. Falconburg looked round, there was such an expression of

distress on her beautiful face that he turned the conversation by asking her "how the children in the small church performed?"

"Very respectably," Helena thought. "Mr. Fortescue she believed to be fond of music, and he took great interest in the singing."

"You probably devote much of your time to practising singing, do you not?"

"Who? I? Oh, no! I never hear the sound of my own voice except in church; or sometimes in the evenings when I can go out and sit on the rocks. Then I like to sing to the waves—and the roar of the breaking billows and the long swish of the pebbles seem an accompaniment."

"Then Mrs. Lavender is not musical?"

"Didst thou not know? Friends have doubts as to the lawfulness of music."

"Then music is not permitted?"

"No,"—a sigh—"I am very fond of it—I like to hear an organ—and, oh! I heard a military band once—it made me feel stifled, it was so grand!"

"Did you ever hear an opera?"

“No—never.”

“You have a great deal to learn in the world?”

“Yes; but I do not suppose I shall ever learn it.”

“Then do you always intend to live with Mrs. Lavender?”

“Yes—if she be so kind as to keep me with her.”

“You are very useful to her, I suppose?” said the gentleman, wanting to find out if she were a menial servant.

“I try to be so,” said the girl; “but she is far more to me than I can be to her. She might find many of her own persuasion who would be glad to be her companion as I am; but I should never again find one so good and kind as herself.”

“How is it that she has not made you one of the Society of Friends? Would she not prefer it?”

“Yes, she would, but she does not approve of proselytism. I told her I wished to go to church once a day, and I go with her to the

Friends' meeting, because she requires assistance in walking."

Mr. Falconburg looked at Helena and smiled.

"You cannot give her much, I suppose?" he said.

"Enough for what she requires—probably nervousness has something to do with her inability to walk without aid;—but, oh dear! here is the dog with the glove! what a darling! how clever! My dog was called Turk," she said, confidentially looking up from the kneeling position to which she had sunk to caress the dog, and to receive the glove. "And he has not torn it in the least, and there is scarcely a mark of his dear mouth," she said, smoothing it over with her handkerchief. It was only a neatly made glove of unbleached linen. "I made it myself," she observed.

"I saw one of your handkerchiefs last evening: it went into the pocket of a gentleman, and I felt quite envious."

"Wouldst thou like one really?" she said, looking up with an eager face; but blushing and looking vexed, she cried, "Ah! thou art

amusing thyself at my expense? thou hast more fine handkerchiefs than thou canst require, and I was foolish to think I could give thee anything."

"But you gave six to Mr. Fortescue."

Helena looked rather ashamed, and said, "I saw his handkerchief was torn, and so—I fancied his maid did not mend them."

"I do not think it was wrong—very right—I assure you I have several handkerchiefs with rents in them."

"Nay, but Richard Falconburg, it would not be fitting in me to give thee handkerchiefs. Friend Fortescue might be my grandfather."

"Ah! I see I am not to have any—you take refuge in propriety to excuse your stinginess; and I should like to know where you were on Sunday last, and why you did not attend church like a good girl?"

Helena was silent, and then said, "Thou seest—thou wert there."

"Bless me! the pew will hold twelve or fourteen properly packed. It is intended for me and my wife and ten children, at the least."

"But," said Helena, with open-eyed wonder, "thou hast no wife, hast thou?"

"No, but I may have, Miss Vernon, and till that happy day may arrive the pew is large enough for two. I suppose Friend Lavender was at the bottom of your absence?"

"*Thou* shouldst call her Mistress Lavender because thou art not a Friend," said Helena, who did not like his mocking tone. "She asked me why I was not preparing for church, and I told her the pew was occupied, and I thought it best to remain with her. I read the service to myself."

"And we lost the benefit of your beautiful voice."

"If my voice aided thy devotion I am sorry I was not there, but I cannot believe that it did, Friend Richard."

"What a prim little girl!" thought Mr. Falconburg.

"I am rather astonished that you allowed a week to elapse before you searched for your glove, Miss Vernon."

"The church is a long distance, and Eliza-

beth Lavender had much sewing work to be finished, so I could not afford the time till to-day. She finished the babylinen on Saturday evening."

"And do you like sewing?"

"Not at all," said the girl, frankly; "and glove-making is the worst of any."

"If you make the gloves yourself, Mrs. Lavender could not have suffered by your losing one."

"Thou dost not consider the unbleached linen, Richard, and the strong thread, and the button to fasten it at the wrist."

"Ah! I see!" said Mr. Falconburg, who was delighted by hearing his christian name from Helena's lips.

"But if you do not like sewing, what do you like?" he asked.

"I like," said Helena, "to sit on a part of the rocks below the cliff, and look out on the broad sea, and fancy all the noble lands which lie under them, where Arthur and Guinevere and Sir Launcelot lived; and then they all come to me like living people, and I see Arthur

—so grand in his denunciation, and Guinevere so fair in her penitence ; and when the waves roar I fancy they are the noise of battles of the noble knights against the heathens.”

“ And does Mrs. Lavender know of these reveries ? ”

“ It seems to me, Richard Falconburg,” with a little gesture of impatience, “ that thou art of a very curious disposition.”

Mr. Falconburg laughed and did not press the question ; but he made up his mind that he would see the ledge of rock on which the beautiful Quaker mermaiden was accustomed to meditate. Suddenly Helena stooped, pulled off her glove, and plucked a branch of the hurtleberry and began, after offering it to her companion, to eat the fruit. In doing this she dropped her glove, and Mr. Falconburg, without telling her, put it in his pocket.

“ They are rather acid,” she said, apologetically, “ but it is so pleasant to find anything nice to eat in the way of fruit when one does not expect it.”

“ Are you fond of fruit ? ”

"Yes, very; but we do not have it sent from home while we are here. It all goes to the patients in the Cornwall Infirmary."

"Now you have stained your fingers," said the gentleman.

"That is better than staining my glove; but, oh! where is my glove?—that is how I lost it on first day!"

She turned back and called to Brisk in great perturbation to help her. The dog knew what was required of him, and standing on his hind legs, he poked his nose into Mr. Falconburg's coat-pocket and produced the glove.

"I did not think thou wouldst have been so—mischievous," she said, smiling. "But I thank thee for thy company; thou hast made a long walk appear a very short one."

Mr. Falconburg raised his hat, and seemed to return back through the park, but he watched the young girl from a distance, and unobserved, till she was safely arrived at the cottage.

CHAPTER XXVI.

“What hidest thou in thy treasure caves and cells,
Thou hollow sounding and mysterious main?
Pale glittering pearls, and rainbow-coloured shells,
Bright things which gleam, unrecked of and in vain.”

ON the following day he went on board his yacht, and as he sailed past the rock he observed the ledge on which she usually sat, he imagined, from her description. An old man accustomed to the coast was with him.

“Is that ledge of rock covered with the sea at high water?”

“No, sir, I never remember to have seen it. It might be, but not in a general way, nor in summer time. There’s a Quaker little maid—she is wonderful fond of sitting there with her book. There is a hollow cave there, and she gets out of the wind and the spray, as comfortable as a squirrel, in the trunk of a tree, only she’ve got no nuts to eat.”

This little maid had become an object of so much interest to Mr. Falconburg that he looked earnestly at the cliff and its surroundings.

“Is there a path up the cliff?”

“Bless you, no, sir—no path—Simon Tre-gellis goes down to get eggs sometimes, but he’s give it up. It wants good eyes, and a steady head; and where would be the use when you can get up by going half a mile along the beach?”

“I was thinking,” said the gentleman, “if a ship were wrecked on these rocks——”

“Very likely ones to do the job, sir.”

“Whether the sailors could climb to the top of the cliff.”

“If the sea ran over that ledge of rock they might manage to climb to the bit of table-rock just above it—it hangs over a kind of awkward you see. With the waves coming after them they might make a try of it; but they could not get any further.”

“Could a boat get to the ledge to take them off?”

"No, sir, no boat could live between the points of the rocks there ; they stand too thick for that."

"I think, to-morrow," thought Mr. Falconburg, "I will call on Mrs. Lavender."

He said this to himself as he landed and passed the cottage late that evening—so late indeed that the lights were gleaming in the upper windows. They were about to seek repose. As he stopped and looked a shadow came to the white window-blind—came within it, leaving a trail of light from the candles inside on her floating hair and white shoulder. The sash was pushed up, and her hands, one placed over the other, in the shape of a sphere, were thrust out into the night air, and then opened wide to allow of the escape of a large white moth, who having full permission to depart, lingering crawled over the pink edge of the girl's hand, visible as it caught the light from the room. Then she shook it off impatiently and it flew away into the darkness.

"I fear, Miss Helena, that I am the moth.

Fancy a man of my experience being such a fool! Thirty making itself an ass for eighteen. I wonder who her parents were—so much depends on that!”

CHAPTER XXVII.

“Thee, wrapt in fancy’s airy beam,
Restless I follow through the extended dream.”

AND Mr. Falconburg went back to Polvedra and went to bed. The wind roared dismally round the old house, and moaned with the sighs of a person in pain. He fell asleep—thinking of the troubled sea—and dreamed of Helena—that she was standing before the altar with him, and Mr. Fortescue was reading the marriage service, when the marble figure representing his mother rose slowly from the tomb and stood between him and his bride. His hair seemed to bristle on his head with horror; the image whom he had so revered and almost worshipped, as the representation of one whom he considered the perfection of womankind, he now shrunk from as an

avenging spirit. It is impossible to describe the feeling of dread of something unknown which paralyses during sleep. The beautiful creature whom he had doated on in childhood, and looked up to as his tenderest friend in boyhood, now seemed to stand by his side, and he would have shrunk from her had movement been possible. There she remained—still—stony-eyed—and the slight girl from whom she separated him, wavered away into a formless mist. Then, with a long articulated cry of agony, he started from sleep; and Brisk, believing that his master wanted aid, sprung on the bed, and licked his face and hands, and the strong man was glad to enfold his canine friend in his arms, and thus slept again more tranquilly.

“I will call on Friend Elizabeth Lavender,” said Mr. Falconburg, “and find out about this girl. I am my own master, and I may marry as I please. If her parents were low born even, I should not care *much*, if the father were honest and independent, avoiding debt and excess, and the mother decent and virtuous.”

And then Richard Falconburg thought of the delicate slender girl, with thoroughbred feet and hands—hands so taper in the fingers and with joints that represented generations lacking exertion.

“I must ask this Quakeress—I imagine the sect is a truthful one. Besides, she can have no object in deceiving me.”

So he knocked at the door, and a decent-looking woman said, “Friend, what wilt thou?”

“I would see Mrs. Lavender.”

“I will ask if she can see thee.”

Presently she returned.

“Elizabeth Lavender will be pleased to see thee,” and half a second later he found himself in the company of the woman he had sought.

The man of the world stood abashed in the presence of the Quakeress.

“I cannot rise without difficulty to bid thee welcome, Richard Falconburg, for I am lame ; but I am pleased to see thee. Men speak of thee as being a just and considerate landlord. It is difficult to be just, especially as thou

art, I understand, mostly absent from thy estate, and must take the opinion of some one on the spot."

"The credit, madam, is due to the clergyman of the small parish—Mr. Fortescue. He has been a friend of long standing, and his intelligence and humanity have saved me from many mistakes. He was a friend of my deceased parents. I have the interest of my poor at heart, and I have called to thank you for the charity you have so liberally dispensed amongst them."

"Is that the only reason of thy visit, friend?"

The direct simplicity of the Quaker lady put Mr. Falconburg out of countenance; but straightforwardness sometimes produces it in candid minds.

"No, it is not," he said.

"What then?"

"Madam," said the gentleman, "you have a young creature living with you, who seems in every way likely to make a man an excellent wife."

“Yes?” interrogated the Quakeress.

“I would know what is her situation with you, and who were her parents?”

“Thou art direct, Friend Richard; I will tell thee all I know. It is nearly four years since a young woman of the Wesleyan persuasion left me very suddenly in consequence of an accident to her mother. I addressed myself to a respectable woman who once lived in my neighbourhood, to obtain for me a young girl from one of the offices with which she was acquainted. The result was that Helena Vernon was sent to me. I was told that she was an orphan; and being slightly related to Lord Santly, he had sent her to school, intending that she should earn her bread. Thou seest I was not about to marry Helena Vernon, and I was satisfied to try her on this recommendation. I have found her singularly modest, intelligent, and sweet tempered. She has not yet joined the Society of Friends, giving as a reason that her parents lie buried in the yard of one of thy steeple houses. Dear child! she enters not into doctrinal points.”

"But who were these parents?" asked Mr. Falconburg.

"I know not," said Mrs. Lavender. "Helena could not be more pleasing to me if she were the daughter of a duchess—probably not so much so. But surely thou art precipitate to wish to marry any one on so short an acquaintance, and after requesting her character as if thou wert seeking to provide thyself with a housemaid."

Mr. Falconburg looked foolish.

"Thou art welcome to visit me if thou seest fit, and if thou dost still desire to make Helena Vernon thy wife, thou canst ask her of her parentage; as Lord Santly spoke of her as the orphan child of a gentleman slightly related to himself, she must be what thou wouldst consider well descended as to one parent."

"You mistake me, madam; I do not think a long pedigree a sufficient guarantee for a wife's virtues. But I think much of race—a subject which I will not discuss with you—only observing that I am a sportsman, and have broken in many dogs, and know the difficulty of train-

ing the progeny of those of either sex, whose parents have hunted wild and not come down to charge."

Mr. Falconburg bowed himself out, and returned home without having seen Helena. He speculated whether she had been at home, and had not cared to see him. This idea was so mortifying to his vanity that he turned towards the beach and found that the tide was out ; he wandered along with seeming carelessness, treading on the low rocks which made navigation so difficult, and when he had gone to some distance, he turned and looked along the amphitheatre of dark cliffs. Sure enough there was a little spot of gray and white on the sombre red granite.

How diminutive it looked. Yet he felt that the whole universe held nothing to him compared to that girl. What a frail vessel to be freighted with a man's happiness !

"Oh, Helena ! my child—my young love ! You know not how dear you are to me !"

He was satisfied with having seen her, and hurried home to summon his gardener, and to

select personally the finest of his fruits and hot-house flowers for Mrs. Lavender, whom he wished to propitiate. He knew that Helena would have her share, but he could not refrain from making a separate basket of fruit with some flowers of the *Daphne Indica*, and addressing it to Miss Vernon, with a hope that she might find the contents of the basket as pleasant as the berries of the huckle.

"Friend Richard Falconburg has been here, and he has sent some flowers and fruit. One basket is for thee. Maybe he feared I should act unfairly by thee and defraud thee of thy just share," the Quakeress observed, smiling.

Helena flushed ; but there was more uneasiness than pleasure in her feelings, seemingly.

"Richard Falconburg means kindly," she said at length, with something of her friend's tranquillity ; "but the wild fruit of the woods was free to all, and I could eat without a feeling of obligation."

"Thou art unreasonable, Helena. Why shouldst thou not take of his abundance? The fruit and flowers are perishable. He was not

asked to send them. It seems churlish to grudge him the pleasure of giving to us what he requires not for himself."

"I should not mind if I could give him anything in return," said the girl, writhing under the sense of obligation. "Dost thou not see, madam, that I fancy I am of use to thee, and my services are not unpleasing to thee; but to Richard Falconburg I can give nothing."

"If thou art so proud, Helena, give him two, or four, or six cambric handkerchiefs, such as thou gavest to friend Fortescue, and that will repay him the full value of the fruit."

The thought of this compromise so inspirited the girl, that she found the grapes and pineapple excellent, and admitted that the flavour did surpass that of the wild fruits of the woods.

After this they met frequently. The handkerchiefs were hemmed and marked. Helena offered them to Mr. Falconburg with blushing timidity, in the presence of Mrs. Lavender, to whom Richard Falconburg was a welcome visitor. He was a man of varied information, and he wished to please. He read the papers

carefully each day, and distilled such of their contents as he thought fitting to the two ladies.

Mr. Falconburg read up the lives and labours of all the most interesting of the sect of the Friends, and Mrs. Lavender thought him the most intelligent gentleman she had ever met.

And what did Helena think ?

Mr. Falconburg did not know ; her countenance was ripe with intelligence when he read to them ; her eyes frequently filled with tears when she found how much he was interested in the well-doing of the poor around them. She retained her strange tranquillity when seated between him and her friend at the window overlooking the ocean, but if by any chance they met in the village, or he joined her as she returned from the beach, she became perturbed and breathless, and seemed not to know what she was saying, or to hear the sentences he addressed to her. Her anxiety was to return to the presence of Mrs. Lavender, where she became tranquil, natural, and only too charming. Mr. Falconburg had not much temptation to seek to meet her in her walks. He had

purposely avoided doing so, thinking it was dishonourable, when Mrs. Lavender so kindly and so frequently admitted him to their society. She herself could not understand Helena's feelings.

"Is the society of Richard Falconburg pleasing to thee, Helena?"

"Very pleasing, dear Friend Lavender."

"It seems to me, my child, that thou art becoming necessary to his happiness, or that he believes this to be the case."

Helena flushed, and then turned very white.

"I should be unhappy if that were the case, madam, for I could not contribute to it."

"I would not have thee think that I would urge thee to marry against thine own convictions; but he is a good and a wealthy man, and as his wife thine hands would be greatly strengthened in carrying out works of mercy."

Helena wept.

"Do not let the dread spectre of future destitution weigh with thee in forming thy determination. I have left thee for thy life one hundred pounds a-year. It will keep thee above want. I cannot but feel that in giving thee up to Richard

Falconburg, I should be preparing for myself many dreary hours ; but the young man is gracious in my eyes, and thou art dear to me, and I should be glad if the future happiness of each should be increased by your union in one."

Helena steadied her voice, and wiped her eyes.

Mrs. Lavender disapproved of all strong emotions, and did not permit the exhibition of them.

"I thank thee, Elizabeth Lavender ; I cannot marry Richard Falconburg."

"Dost thou wish that I should tell him this ? It will be best that he should leave us, for a child that sees the fruit he longs for before his eyes is uneasy if he obtain it not, but when he sees it no longer it passes from his mind."

"As thou thinkest best, Elizabeth Lavender," said Helena ; though I query whether the way in which her friend regarded the matter was one most likely to afford consolation to the young girl.

Helena's determination was communicated by Mrs. Lavender to Richard Falconburg.

He was staggered at the news, and intensely wounded and mortified ; no man in earnest will take "No," from any lips but those he loves.

"I will speak to Helena myself," he said, decidedly.

"Do so," replied the tranquil Quakeress.

In truth, he was well skilled in detecting the indications of feminine preference ; and after the first shock of Mrs. Lavender's information, he took refuge in incredulity. He was too much disturbed to ask where she was.

"I will find her," he said, and made his way to the beach.

He felt sure he should discover her on the rocks in her usual place, though he knew he could not see her till he had turned the point of rock behind which she had made her resting-place. The tide had retired far down the beach, and the roaring of the waves was less loud. He heard Helena's heavenly voice, therefore, plainly, as she was singing the penitential

psalm he had listened to in the small church in the park :

“ Have mercy, Lord, on me,
As Thou wert ever kind,
Let me, oppressed by loads of guilt,
Thy wonted mercy find.
Wash out my foul offence,
And cleanse me from my sin,
For I confess my crime and see
How great my guilt has been.”

“ Poor child ! ” he thought, “ what has been the guilt that has weighed on that tender conscience ? Has she purloined jam, intended for tarts and puddings from her friend ? ”

Suddenly he appeared before her ; she gave a sudden gasp, which would have been a cry, but for her Quaker training.

“ Am I so frightful to you, Helena, that you are alarmed at the sight of me ? ”

“ Nay, Richard Falconburg, thou knowest that thine is a presence which claims admiration amongst men,” she said, with a little quivering attempt to smile.

“ May I sit by your side ? ”

“ I was about to return to the house,” she said.

"Indeed, my Quakeress, that is an untruth!"

"It was," said the girl convicted, looking down.

"I am tired, so I will rest on this rock for a space; during which I trust we shall not quarrel."

They sat in silence for a few minutes, looking away over the precipitous sands, edged by a line of breakers on the shore, with other lines following in endless succession.

"My mother," said the gentleman, "used to sing a pretty simple song, beginning, 'Fresh and strong the breeze is blowing.'"

And he sang the first verse.

" ' Fresh and strong the breeze is blowing,
As yon ship at anchor rides—

(That is my yacht, you see.)

Sullen waves incessant flowing,
Rudely dash against its sides.' "

"Thou hast derived thy voice from thy mother, I suppose," said Helena, "as thou sayest she used to sing it?"

"And you?" he cried, turning quickly on her.

"My mother was musical, and sang," said the girl, colouring; "but latterly her voice was thin and weak, though it still showed careful cultivation."

This observation dismissed the idea which had floated in the mind of Mr. Falconburg, that Helena was Lord Santly's natural daughter by some woman of low birth; and that this reason accounted for his wish that she should earn her bread, and live in her mother's station.

"Is that all thy song?" asked the girl.

"No; there is a second verse—the application of the first :

" ' So my heart, its course impeded,
Beats in my perturbed breast,
Doubts, like waves by waves succeeded,
Rising, still deny it rest. ' "

Helena turned pale—even to her lips.

"Oh! I hope it is not coming," she thought; and her mouth involuntarily moved to the words without uttering a sound.

Now on the brink, Richard Falconburg hesitated.

"Can I ask a girl of her parentage, without giving as a reason that I wish to make her my wife? and should she consent to be my wife, and tells me that her mother was an outcast from the pale of society, can I say to her that I will not marry you now you have confessed this?"

He had previously determined to seek Lord Santly, and ask the truth of him; but the pages of the *Morning Post* had stated that his lordship was travelling in the Mediterranean for his health; and Richard Falconburg was too much in love to leave the neighbourhood of Helena, though he had found the Mediterranean a delightful place for yachting.

The shrinking modesty and the beauty of the girl overpowered the suggestions of prudence.

"Helena," he said, passing his arm round her waist, and drawing her closely to his side, looking down on her beautiful sensitive face, "will you be my wife?"

She disengaged herself quietly, but determinedly.

"No, Richard Falconburg, I will not."

He started up, flushed with anger and disappointment, though ten minutes sooner he doubted the wisdom of the question.

"May I ask your reasons, Miss Vernon?"

"Thou mayst ask," said the girl, driven into a corner; "but, surely, I am not bound to give them."

"Some previous attachment, I presume?"

"Truly, Richard, if thou hast a rival," she said, with a wan smile, "thou knowest him quite well. I know thee, and I know Friend Fortescue. If I love thee not, and yet do love, Friend Fortescue must be the man, seeing that I was scarcely more than a child when I came to Elizabeth Lavender; and you two are the only men with whom I have exchanged a sentence since I left Lord Santly, and he might have been my grandfather—in age, I think."

"Have you quite resolved, Helena?"

"Yes, Richard," she replied, with a tremulous voice.

"Then, good-bye, my dear child. I will never urge you to what is contrary to your inclinations. I daresay you consider me old and ugly, and fit only to be your uncle or even your grandfather."

"Won't you shake hands?"

Helena put her cold hand into his. She dared not trust her voice.

"I shall not remain in the neighbourhood more than a couple of days. I have a few things to do at Polvedra, and then I shall leave the coast."

Helena turned away as he relinquished her hand, and sat down again, leaning her forehead on her knee to hide her tears. He had strode along, and had not perceived them.

Then her cries and sobs burst forth. There were no witnesses, except the sea-gulls, of this uncontrolled grief.

"Oh! I love him! I love him! He may regret me now a little. If he knew all he would cease to do so. I could not bear his contempt. I am selfish in this, but I could not bear that he should despise me. Ah, me!

Why is life given to him who is in misery, and light unto the bitter in soul ! ”

With this cry, wrung from her aching heart, she rose, and slowly took the path to the cottage.

“Hast thou spoken with Richard Falconburg ? ” said the Quakeress.

“Yea, Elizabeth Lavender.”

“Poor child ! thy face is swollen with weeping. Art thou sure thou art not throwing away thine happiness ? ”

“I am sure I am doing what is right,” she said, with a sigh.

The weather had become uncertain, and the equinoctial gales had begun. The sky was leaden in colour and the sea reflected it.

Helena sat with her friend till the hours appointed to needlework had passed, when she was accustomed to take her evening walk.

“Art thou going out, Helena ? ”

“Yes, unless thou desirest that I stay with thee.”

“No, my dear ; but the wind is high. Be careful not to stand near the edge of the cliff.”

"No, I will go below them ; but did I walk on the summit, I should not be blown into the sea, but from it, as the wind is towards the shore."

"Thou wilt not be late ?"

"No, only a little walk to cool my face, thou knowest."

And she went.

The wind increased in violence, and the sky grew darker. The Quaker lady looked sadly at the horizon.

"It is thus with the young," she moralised. "They leave us when they are with young and gay companions. They fly from us even when in mental suffering, because they disbelieve in our sympathy."

The red ball of the sun now showed itself as about to sink below the horizon.

"I shall not see Richard Falconburg again, probably," she speculated.

But at that moment came the accustomed ring at the door, and the man himself entered.

"I am come to bid you adieu, madam."

"Thou should not use that word lightly, Richard Falconburg. Thou knowest French."

"Then, 'farewell;' for good-bye would be as bad as adieu."

"Must thou go?"

"Yes, Miss Vernon has given me my dismissal; and I think I had better take myself off."

"I take comfort in thy presence, for sometimes the spirit gives one warning of coming evil; and this evening my heart is disquieted within me."

"I am glad I can feel that I have the power of comforting any one," the gentleman said, with a sigh; "but I must not stay for I am keeping Miss Vernon out of the room."

"She is walking on the beach," said the lady.

"No; you must be mistaken: the waves were running up the pebbles past the point where she rounds when she goes to her usual seat. One of the old sailors whom I met said he had not for forty years seen so high a tide, and it is not high water."

Elizabeth Lavender raised her hands and dropped them again.

"She will be swallowed up in the raging waves—I shall never see her again!"

"Surely she has not been so mad as to go to the beach again to-day! When I left it I saw by the line of weeds how much higher the previous tide had been than usual."

"Where can I send? what should be done?" said the matron, driven out of all composure.

Mr. Falconburg thought of what the old seaman had said about Simon Tregellis going down the cliff to get eggs. It might be possible to descend the cliff, and if she were not already washed off her resting-place he might drag her to the upper ledge.

"I must try to get to her down the cliff. Send to my yacht and order my men to the top of the cliff with torches, they may be able to give you some intelligence of her—my life is of little consequence."

"Could not a boat reach her—the boat from thy yacht?"

"It would not live ten minutes in this sea amongst the rocks—she must be reached from the land or not at all."

When Helena reached her platform of rock she shrank into the little recess where she sheltered in rough weather—too wretched to think of anything but that she had signed the warrant for the execution of her own happiness.

“For I love him ! I love him ! Oh, mamma, mamma ! hadst thou loved papa like this thou couldst never have left him. Poor dear mamma ! I shall always love her for all that may be said against her. But Richard ! I am her daughter, I am branded with her guilt. Poor lost daughter, weighed down by the shame of the lost mother.”

She sat with her face buried on her knees, when a larger wave than usual broke against the rock and covered her with spray. She was by no means alarmed, for she believed that the tide would turn directly. She had often seen it advance to her cavern, but never so near as this. It was only to wait patiently, but the red sun sinking below the line of angry billows shed a portentous lurid light, and it was disappearing and would leave Helena to the darkness and

the storm. Poor girl! she wished the waves would not come so very high; the mark made by the spring tide on the cliffs at its highest was now covered. She came from the recess and stood on the platform, and looked out on the advancing billows curling inward as if they would drag her under their sweep, and stifle her with sand, and bruise her to death against the points of rock. She saw one giant ninth wave coming towards her like a wall of water, curling at the summit. Then she gave a long and pitiful cry for help! help! which went off into a wail, for she knew no help could reach her; her heart was throbbing fearfully—must she die—must she go away into the darkness and never know light or living voices again?

Oh! this was dreadful! She had tried once when a child whether drowning would be very awful, by putting her head into a pail of cold water, and keeping it there till she was nearly suffocated, and had felt the horrors of it; but the bodily pangs seemed not so fearful as the severance from light and living people.

"Oh! mercy! mercy! Help! help!" she cried, distractedly.

The gulls all chorused her bitter pleadings, but no one else heard them.

In the meantime Richard Falconburg had reached the cliffs, and throwing off his coat and boots he tied his white handkerchief to one of the furze-bushes that skirted the top of the cliff that his men might know where to look for him. He doubted his descending alive, for his task must be accomplished before the red disk disappeared

The first part of the cliff sloped backwards, and he thought it safest to slide part of the way, directing his course by hands and feet till he arrived at a hollow cavern in the side; to avoid this he had to turn over on his face twice to escape the recess. He saw below him the higher ledge covered with soft sea-pink, to which he must drag Helena if, indeed, she still retained her footing on the lower piece of rock.

Breathless and terrified he called Helena, but the wind carried away his voice. He could not see her because the broad ledge to which he

had now slid overhung the one where she stood. He must drop down and take the chance of reascending, or of dying with her.

He stooped, and digging his nails into the earth he flung himself down, just as Helena, gasping from repeated shocks of the billows, had begun her death struggle. The waves had retired for an instant, but they would return.

“You must climb quick!”

But the poor child with her numbed limbs and clinging clothes stood motionless and helpless. He seized her in his arms.

“Now catch hold of the ledge of rocks—I will take care you shall not fall.”

He pushed her up so that she caught hold of the rough close surface, and quickened by terror drew herself into safety.

Richard Falconburg did not immediately follow her. He had an enemy to contend with, a roaring blinding billow, which overwhelmed him and strove to suck him away in its deadly folds. He flung both arms round the point of rock which made the outer part of Helena's recess, and when it had retired he sprung with

his two hands on the upper ledge, and dragged himself close to the rock by Helena's side.

She put out her hand, terrified and sobbing, and placed it on Richard Falconburg's shoulder.

"Art thou safe? art thou hurt?" He had some notion that a voice was saying something to him from a far distance, that the rock had become water in which he was sinking, for the tension on his nerves had been so great for the last half-hour, that having attained safety for the next fifteen minutes for himself and his companion, his head swam, and he felt incapable of hearing clearly or of understanding what Helena said, or of realising that Helena was near him. It had become too dark to distinguish any object clearly.

Helena, with teeth that chattered with terror, passed her hand over the face of her companion and felt the lids to be partially closed, and the mouth half open.

"Oh! he is dead! dead!" she cried. "Richard! speak one word! thou hast killed thyself in lifting me into safety. I would rather that I had died."

The syncope was but momentary. Richard Falconburg roused himself and perceived the difficulties of the situation. He was thoroughly wetted by the large wave which had all but engulfed him, but he was accustomed to sports which rendered hardships not hard to him. He could rely on his circulation now it had recovered the first shock ; but what would be the result to the delicate girl by his side ?

Besides this there was a nearer anxiety. He did not believe the tide had yet reached its highest point, and yet it was rapidly rising, and the crests of the larger waves showed their teeth through the darkness nearly on a level with the lower part of their platform which sloped towards the sea.

Helena, who was ashamed of the distress she had shown at his faintness, remained silent till Richard said in a constrained voice :

“ You had better come nearer to me, Miss Vernon.” Then after a little pause, during which he was squeezing the water from his hair, “ I shall be able to shelter you better from the cold.”

"Where are you?" she said, for she could not distinguish him.

He stretched out his arm and drew her closer to the rock, seating himself between her and the wind. He was filled with anxiety for her and for himself, but would not speak to her on the subject, and could not speak on any other. His heart was beating very fast. It was terrible to wait for death thus. A larger wave than usual broke with a mighty roar over the edge of their platform, and swept its thin sheet of foam over the dark rock, and its nestled sea-pinks, carrying them away in its circles.

"Don't you think, Richard," said Helena, in a quavering voice, "that the waters will cover this rock?"

He did not answer—and she understood his silence.

"Thou hast sacrificed thy own life for mine," she said in a tone of intolerable anguish.

"Do not distress yourself," he said proudly; "I should have done the same for the ugliest and oldest woman in the parish of Polvedra." Then he gave a little laugh of contempt of himself.

"Truly our weaknesses dodge us to the very threshold of eternity," he thought.

In the midst of the peril of approaching death he had wished to mortify the girl for whom he had, as she truly said, sacrificed his hope of life. Another wave swept over the rock. Helena terrified, flung her arms round him, as if to retain him from the force of the water. He loosened her hold.

"Let me go," he said; "you would only be dragged after me into that swirling abyss. Every five minutes gives an additional hope of safety. There is no reason why you should not escape if I am washed away."

"Oh! Richard! I should not live if thou wert dead. Let us pray—even as those on the stormy Sea of Galilee, 'Save us, Lord, or we perish!'"

There was no response, for they were for an instant smothered with water and sand, and then left panting and breathless, but still clinging to the rock as they lay gasping from terror and from the sudden shock of blood driven to the heart.

A red light flung its flashing beams on their place of refuge, and shouts were faintly heard from the top. Mr. Falconburg's yachtsmen had obeyed the orders he had left with Mrs. Lavender, and come to the edge of the cliff with torches. The wind was so high that what they said was inaudible, but presently a weighted rope descended near them on the rock with a running noose, to be placed under the arms.

"God has heard my prayers," said the girl, "and has opened for thee a way to escape."

"No woman could climb up, even with that rope," Richard Falconburg answered quietly; "it would be difficult for me."

"But it would give *thee* a chance of life," urged the girl.

"Hold fast to the rock," he said, as they had remained standing after the last emersion.

"I pray thee to go——"

"And I pray thee not to talk nonsense," he replied irritably, "or I will take you at your word and go."

"Would that thou wouldst," she sighed.

Richard took out his watch, and waited for

the gust of the wind to pass over that he might catch the light from the cliff. When he did so, he said :

“Cheer up, it is high tide—it must have turned even now.” Then he added—“I wish I had a pencil and paper.”

Helena put her hand into her pocket and pulled out a small note-book, furnished with a pencil ; the closely pressed leaves had escaped the salt water, and Mr. Falconburg looked hopelessly at the small sheet of paper when he had written on it, and Helena, as quick as lightning, dived into the other pocket and produced a needle-book and cotton.

“Hast thou said we are safe to Elizabeth Lavender?” she asked timidly.

“No, but I will,” and he added it to what he had already written, and then bound the paper to the rope, which after a few minutes’ more delay they drew to the surface.

The wave broke again and they staggered under its force ; but it retired and left them shivering and ready to welcome the consignment which swung down over the cliff, con-

sisting of two rough cloaks, one sent by Mrs. Lavender and one belonging to the yacht.

She had intended it to wrap round Helena when she should have ascended the cliff, not knowing the impossibility of such a performance for a female.

“ Now we may as well sit down and wait for daylight.”

“ Like Saint Paul,” said the girl.

Richard Falconburg wrapped the cloak round her, and did the same good office to himself ; and then they sat side by side, silent and motionless, and might, by their undefined forms and dark colours, have been mistaken for parts of the rock. Presently Richard observed his companion sinking back against the cliff. The terror and anxiety had ceased. The cloak had produced a comfortable feeling of warmth like that of a vapour bath. Bodily fatigue had strangled all other sensations. Her head, covered with the cloak, rested against the cliff. Her bonnet and cap had been carried away by the waters, and the hair fell in dark masses over her shoulders. The dark gray cloth hood came

over her brow and shadowed her eyes from the light which now began to gleam down from behind the cliff. Her mouth, half open, in colour like oleander buds ; her rounded chin and white throat were visible over the fastening of the cloak. Her small tender hands lay helplessly by her side. Richard Falconburg turned on his elbow and observed her attentively. How strangely incurious had that lady been who, living in the house with Helena, had not cared to find out who were her parents ; and of what profound reserve must Helena be possessed never to have mentioned them. It might be that they had died when she was too young to remember them ; but Helena had, when questioned by him, admitted that her mother's voice was cultivated—a fact of which in very early childhood she could not have judged.

“ I had a dog once,” was all the reference she ever had made to the past.

There she lay, so seemingly innocent, so helpless and unconscious. Her past life “ hushed into depths beyond the watcher's

diving." It seemed indelicate to gaze at the face too insensible to shrink from his scrutiny, or to touch the fingers which lay within an inch of his own.

Surely never before had such incongruous circumstances occurred. She refuses him in the morning—she is in danger of death from which he saves her in the evening, and they pass the night together sub Jove—in defiance of all rules of propriety, but with noble purity that saints and angels might have revered.

The sun blazed out and the dark rocks gleamed bright in its radiance. Richard Falconburg leaned over the platform of rock and said that he should soon be able to round the point and carry Helena in his arms. Her shoes were gone and one of her stockings cut through, and from the wounded foot the blood was slowly trickling.

"She should sleep till the last moment," he told himself, and when the sands were passable he knelt by her side, and called "Helena," gently, not to alarm her. She was startled nevertheless, and looking up at him

and then hurriedly at her dress, she flushed with a crimson glow all over her face and neck.

"Thou must think me very untidy," she said, unconscious that her disordered garments and dishevelled hair revealed new beauties by contrast with her general precision.

"We can return to civilized life, Miss Vernon," he said. "You ought to undress and go to bed."

She rose, but sank down again with a little cry.

"So I supposed," he observed quietly. "We neither of us have boots, but I can manage to carry you to the cottage, and no one will see us at this hour in the morning."

He threw himself down from the rock, and turning received Helena in his arms. Then he carried her, covered by her cloak, to the cottage, where, pale and anxious, the kind mistress was waiting with hot coffee and a good fire.

Mr. Falconburg did not refuse a well-aired bed, for he had no dry clothes, and he felt the comfort to be found in warmth and forgetfulness.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

—— “She stains her cheeks
With mourning tears to purge her mother’s ill ;
And ’mongst that sacred dew she mingles prayers,
Her pure oblations, for my safe return.”

HELENA could not sleep. Mrs. Lavender, with carefully concealed anxiety, sat by her side, silently hoping that the restless turning from side to side would cease.

“Dear Helena !” she said at length, “if thou wouldst prefer to talk, do so.”

She had previously enjoined silence.

“Yes,” said the girl, feverishly, with unnatural and rapid utterance, “I must talk—he saved my life—he was hard and cold afterwards—and he will not love me when he knows all ;—but he shall know the truth, and that I was weak and selfish when I desired that he

should regret me, not understanding I was not worth regret."

"Thou art not thyself, poor child!" said the matron.

"Perhaps thou wilt throw me off too, madam, when thou knowest all."

"I think I may promise that I will not, my dear child."

"I do not know, but I can guess—and I have been told——But do not think too hardly of her! Oh! my poor mamma!" cried Helena, agitated and weeping. "Mamma and papa quarrelled, and she left him, and lived with some one else. Papa took me away from her. Then I do not know what came next, but I remember being at school and happy, till the holidays came, when other little girls went home and I stayed with the servants in the lonely house.

"Then I was turned out from living with the girls because I was too shabby—I had no clothes.

"After that I was sent for to go and see my uncle, I was told then; but after I knew it was

poor papa. He died before I saw him, and a relation—very distant—took care of me and sent me to school. Mamma saw me—that was the day I got Turk. I was so happy I had been sent to another school to learn what I could from everybody ; and I used to run errands and go to mamma by stealth.

“ At last she went away—and I was miserable.”

“ Thou shouldst not use such big words, Helena. Thou shouldst say ‘ I regretted her loss.’ ”

“ When I saw her again I was living with Lord Santly, and she had scarcely any money, and she was dying. She had written to someone for some money but it did not come—dying as she was, they threatened to send her to the union. I begged Lord Santly to give me four pounds, and he would not ; my poor mamma would not have it told that she was there.

“ Lord Santly was furious.”

“ Displeased,” suggested the Quakeress.

“ He would not give me the money. I got

his keys and took what I wanted for her—four pounds. I meant to put it back when she got her cheque, and I put two beautiful rings of mamma's in the bag with the gold—in place of the money. The cheque came, but mamma died a few hours after. When Lord Santly slept I opened the secret drawer and put in the four sovereigns, but the rings slipped down between the gold. I could not reach to get them out. He awoke and said I was mixed up with bad characters."

Here Helena sobbed till she was exhausted, the Quakeress tenderly, now and then, holding cold water to her lips.

"Poor dear mamma!" were her next words, as if in deprecation of the reproach. "He said I should be sent to a reformatory. I had heard of such places from Mrs. Crew when I was at school. I ran away and went to her, and she was kind and good. I did not tell her, but she knew Lord Santly meant me to be a servant, so she sent me to thee."

"She did well, my dear child. I do not love thee less, but more for all that thou hast

suffered. Lord Santly sent thy rings back, then?"

"Yes—I was too frightened to make him understand why I had put them there."

"Didst thou believe them to be of value?"

"I *thought* they were. Poor mamma had kept them to the last—she was afraid of the nurse, I think, poor mamma! and gave them to me; but I could not be sure," she interjected with scrupulous truth, learnt of her Quaker friend. "They might have been false gems."

"Art thou not sorry that thou wast so dishonest?"

"*No!*" said Helena, sitting up—with flushed cheeks and flaming eyes. "I tried to be sorry when I saw how good thou wert—but I never was really—and never—*never* shall I regret having taken the money and saved mamma from insult—and I should do it again."

"Alas! this is sad indeed—'The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge.' Dost thou wish me to relate

this to Richard Falconburg? If thou thinkest that he will marry thee knowing it, thou wilt find thyself mistaken. His ideas are peculiarly strict—as to ancestry.”

“No,” said the girl, with a sigh of exhaustion, “I do not expect it; but I believe that he will understand now why I refused him.”

“He asked me to marry him under a noble impulse. I would not accept him when I knew that he would revolt from his offer when he heard the truth, in feeling, though not in words. I wished he should regret me. I owe it to him for the worthless life he has saved that he should not have the grief of a regret. He must have known the circumstances of my birth sooner or later.

“The theft of the money no one probably would ever have become acquainted with, but from myself, as Lord Santly made no allusion to it to thee when he returned the rings.”

“Thou wouldst have me tell him *all*?” the Quakeress reiterated, for she knew what the

effect would be on Mr. Falconburg's mind, and shrunk from the task.

"*All*, madam!"

"I fear me, that if thou wert to become his wife—when that which men call love has ceased to survive, and love is short lived—that he might regret."

"I know—I know—I would not marry him—for his sake. Oh! dear friend! go and tell him *all* I have told thee."

"I will—but he is weary, and sleeps. Thou know'st he was going away in his yacht to-day; but I will not disturb him. He was greatly exhausted when he brought thee in. Now sleep, Helena." And having relieved her mind of a heavy load the girl slept.

It was some hours after when Richard Falconburg had heard all that Helena had directed Mrs. Lavender to tell him.

He heard her in silence, but with a countenance stony and inscrutable. The gentlewoman was grieved.

"Friend!" she said, answering what she believed to be in his mind. "Suppose a young

girl found her mother wounded, bleeding, dying, from a fall over Polvedra cliff, and with her unassisted powers had to support and sustain the miserable woman till death came to lift the burden from her arms—dost thou think that the child grown up would be likely to play recklessly on the slippery verge ? ”

Mr. Falconburg arose, and taking Mrs. Lavender's hand, shook it warmly—“ May God bless you ! ” he said, “ and—Farewell ! ”

He left the house without another word.

With a swelling heart she returned to the sitting-room, where she found Helena employed as usual with a heavy garment on her lap for some poor person. She did not look up when Mrs. Lavender entered. The girl dreaded to learn her fate from her friend's countenance, for she knew now how self-deceived she had been. She knew that a hope had lived in her heart that knowing all he would yet seek her—“ for I love him ! I love him ! O how I love him ! ” she repeated to herself.

Mrs. Lavender did not speak, and Helena could not. Her heart was beating so fast. The

little room had two windows, one looking on to the flower-garden ; that of which the blind was drawn to exclude the glare of the sun, looked on the sea. The silence seemed to suffocate Helena. " Well ? " she articulated at length. The Quakeress, for answer, withdrew the blind from the window which looked on the ocean, still yeasty with the storm of the previous evening ; with the broad view came in sight the yacht in full sail, rapidly nearing the horizon.

No word was spoken—nor was needed.

" Pick up thy sewing, Helena, thou hast dropped it on the floor."

* * * * *

It was four months after when Richard Falconburg arriving at Polvedra bay, saw as he ascended the cliff the signs of life and occupation in the cottage possessed by Mrs. Lavender.

" In a few minutes I shall see her," he said, thinking of Helena. His resolutions had been combated for many weeks, but the thought of Helena's plaintive voice heard through the rush

and tumult of the surge, as she held him on the rock, with the feeble grasp of girlhood—of the words she uttered—"I could not live if thou wert gone," made him, as he admitted to himself, a confounded fool, who was about to rush on his own destruction with his eyes open to its certainty and completeness.

"I am no wiser than other men," he thought, "after all my theories—Helena loves me. As to my children, and the qualities they may derive from her parents——well!—I will not think of that. I must see her—hear her voice, put my arms round her once more." Alas!

When he reached the cottage he made his way in silence to Mrs. Lavender's morning room. She was sitting very quietly with some needle-work on her lap, with her hands dropped on it as she gazed vacantly through the window towards the ocean, now gray and perturbed. She did not turn her head to the door till Mr. Falconburg cried, breathlessly, "Helena!"

"Thou art late, Richard Falconburg," she then said, turning to him quietly.

"Where is she?" he asked, hoarsely.

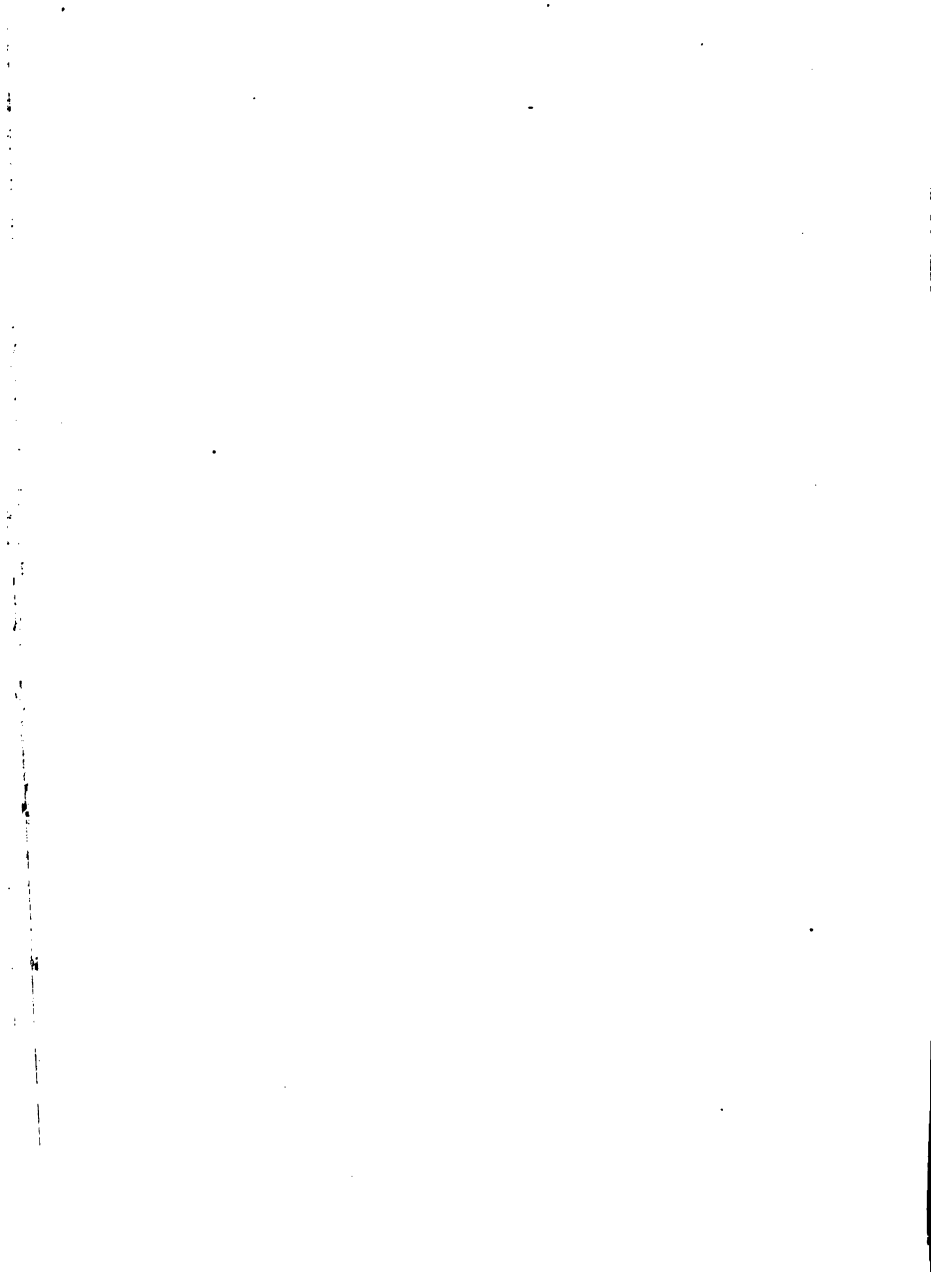
"She was given over to the care of thy friend, Christopher Fortescue yesterday," the Quakeress replied. "She lies in thy church-yard. After thy departure she used to sit and watch the horizon where thy yacht disappeared. She said nothing against thee. Once, when I suggested that thy judgment was harsh, she replied that 'it was just.' Alas! strict justice is not for fallible creatures, Richard Falconburg, like ourselves; but do not grieve;" for the strong man, with his face hidden on his arm which rested on the back of a chair, groaned aloud. "Thy—I will not say cruel—decision came as the climax of a life which had been one of pain for the faults of others. Had she lived to bring thee children, faultless and devoted as she would have been to thee, thou wouldst have made her life wretched, by severity to her offspring, in whom thou wouldst have fancied or found the faults of her parents reproduced.

"She had some vague hope of thy return seemingly—who ceases to hope till they cease

to live?—and I had not the heart to remove her, though the winter had come—*then* it was no longer possible. Do not weep, Richard Falconburg.

“She is at rest—she can never suffer more.”

THE END.



2





